

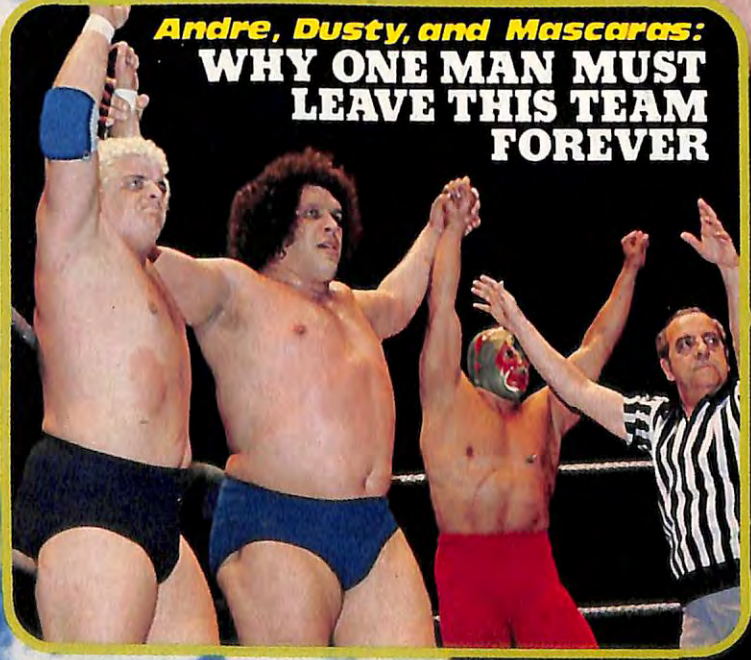


Inside *Ricky Steamboat Has Made His Choice:*
"I'LL NEVER DESERT THE FANS!"

JULY 1978
47727 \$1.00

Wrestling

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BACKLUND
LEARNS THE
BLOODY
HORROR
OF BEING
CHAMPION**



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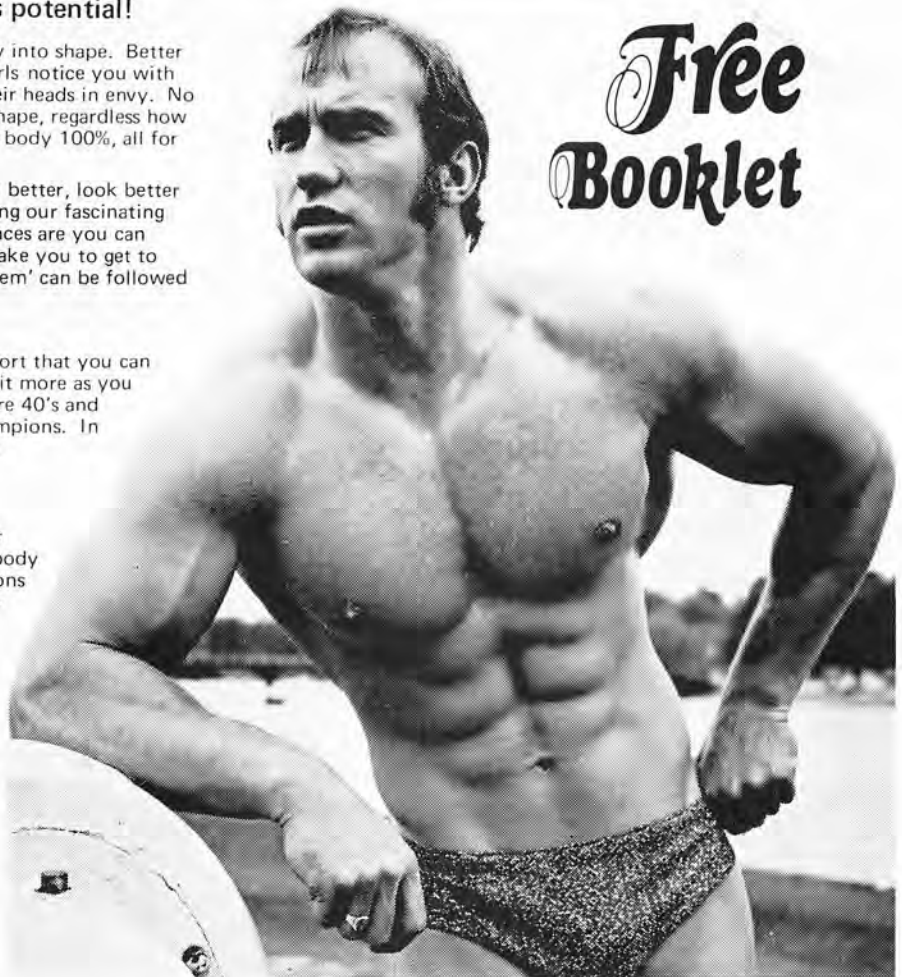
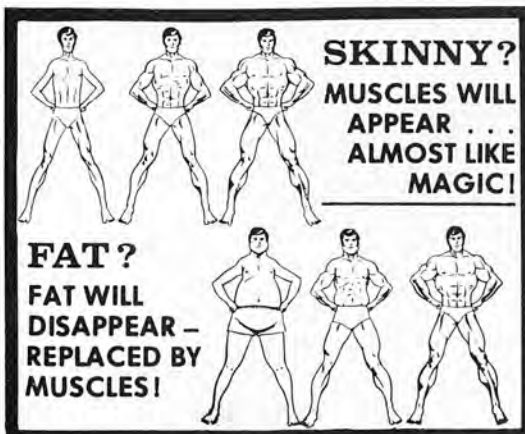
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INSIDE *Wrestling*

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Peter
King

Editor-in-Chief

This month I have a very special column for you. I am going to take you where no fans ever go. Come with me as we go into the dressing rooms of three major arenas.

MAPLE LEAF GARDENS (TORONTO): Tonight, Jay Strongbow will get a shot at Nick Bockwinkle's AWA title. Bockwinkle paces in his dressing room, so nervous he can't stand still. Manager Bobby Heenan whispers something into Nick's ear. With a banshee scream, Bockwinkle shoves Heenan hard into the concrete wall. Nick then gets up and takes a shower--before the match! The rumor grapevine has it that Heenan signed this match without Bockwinkle's knowledge. Never have I seen a champion so frightened before a title defense.

GREENSBORO COLISEUM: Ken Patera, the newly-crowned Mid-Atlantic champion, struts around his dressing room like a peacock with Gucci feathers. He seems at ease, joking with reporters, many of whom have covered his recent WWF matches. Suddenly, a young, inexperienced reporter asks Patera why he never decisively beat Bruno Sammartino. Ken explodes, and orders everyone out of his dressing room. In the hall, the kid looks at me despondently and says, "Geez, I never got an answer!" Believe me, kid, you got an answer all right!

FT. HESTERLY ARMORY (TAMPA): I thought I'd get an exclusive interview with Killer Karl Kox. However, on my way to his dressing room, I bumped into an old "friend" I hadn't seen in a couple of years, Bob Duncum. "Pardner," Bobby warned me, "Kox is a crazy person. He's the best tag pardner I've ever had, but the things I've seen him do to reporters, well, they give even me nightmares. Stay away from him." I decided to follow Duncum's advice. It's not that I'm scared, mind you. It's just that I always was smarter than I am brave!

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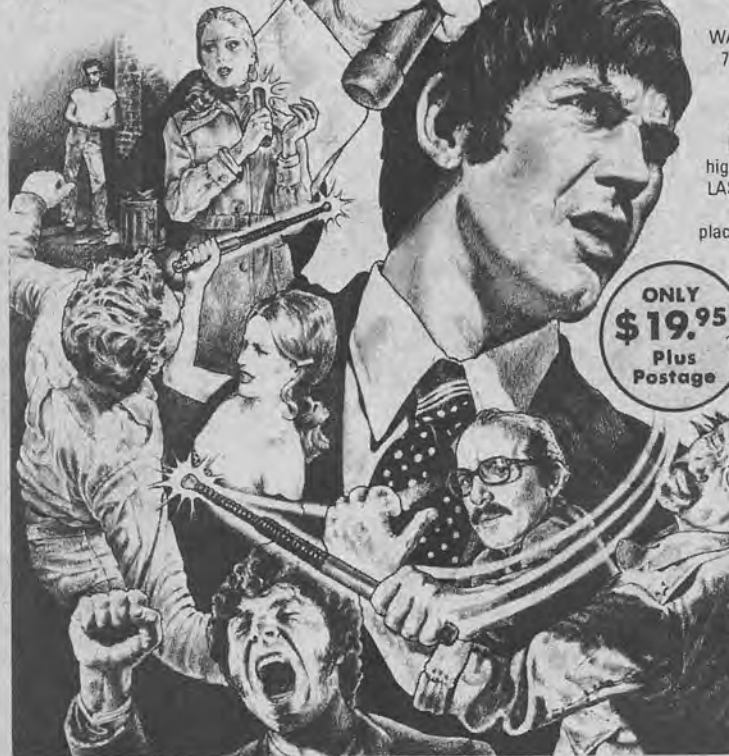
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TOP SECRET

Behind the Dressing Room Door

by Randy
Gordon



RULEBREAKERS ARE EVIL! They are about the lowest form of life on this planet that I can think of. How any sane wrestling fan can worship and adore them is beyond me.

Tell me, what is there to like about rulebreakers? Perhaps I am missing something. Perhaps I just don't understand. What is there to like about The Sheik, a man who, among other things, burns people. What is there to like about Abdullah the Butcher, a man (if I may call him that) who, among other things, savages people? How could fans have enjoyed watching a man such as Killer Kowalski, who once cut off a man's ear during a match, and laughed hysterically about it? There is something terribly sadistic about enjoying such actions. Think about it for a moment.

Wrestling is a sport. It's the greatest sport in the world. We all know that. The word "sport" is defined in the dictionary as "person characterized by his observance of the rule of fair play, or by his ability to get along with others." Right away, Bruno Sammartino, Mil Mascaras, Bob Backlund, and Dusty Rhodes come to mind.

The word "crime" is defined as "any grave offense against morality or social order." That makes any person who engages in such an act a criminal. Right away, Lou Albano, Ken Patera, Superstar Billy Graham, Abdullah and The Sheik come to mind. They should be banned from wrestling. In fact, they should all be thrown in jail or placed on a remote island in the Pacific with no way of getting off.

(Continued on page 44)

There's a world of music between having a guitar... *and knowing how to play it!*

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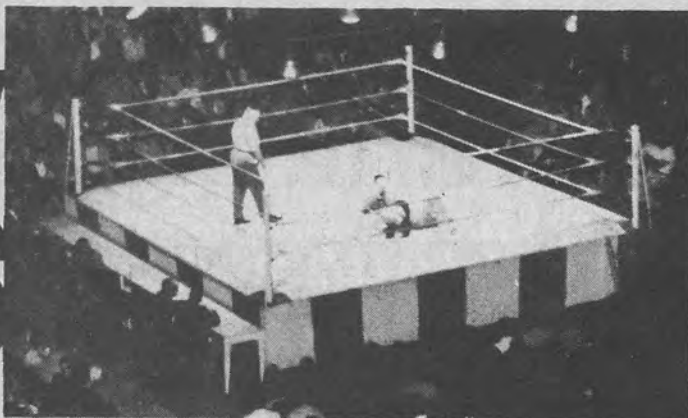
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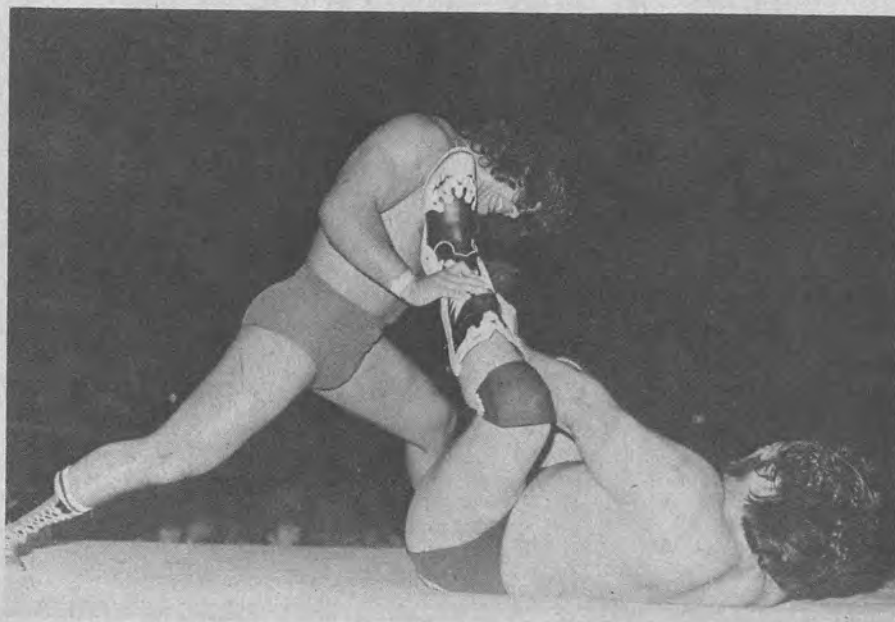
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Above: Ken Patera is one of the most hated rulebreakers in the sport's history. Below: Fans wrote in to warn Rick Steamboat against taking too many matches against men like Blackjack Mulligan. However, Steamboat looks like he can hold his own against the notorious Mulligan.



LET HIM DO IT!

If Dan Shocket likes the rulebreakers so much, why doesn't he get into the ring with them. Once that mealy-mouthed baboon is crippled for the rest of his worthless days, he might change his tune and learn something about wrestling, the way Randy Gordon does. Shocket is as disgusting as Patera and Flair, except I think Flair is good-looking, which I'm sure anyone as stupid as Shocket isn't. How anyone can glorify these animals is beyond me, but maybe Shocket is one of them. Just to let you know, Danny boy, that there's an opening in the Bronz Zoo for the likes of you.

CARLOS SANCHEZ
Staten Island, N.Y.

PLEASE SAVE HIM

I too, am concerned about Rick Steamboat's well-being. Too often wrestlers feel they must prove something both to themselves and their fans by taking on the most vicious grapplers imaginable. They only end up maimed for life and unable to continue a promising career.

I think this is what Steamboat must avoid. "Won't Anyone Save Rick Steamboat From Disaster (April 1978) points this out clearly. There is a thin line between bravery and stupidity and I think whoever is advising Steamboat to wrestle such amoral villains as Flair and Mulligan is stupid. With the proper

(Continued on page 46)

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Each day, out of the thousands of letters we receive, hundreds of them are from fans asking the whereabouts of their favorite wrestler. In this special column, we will try to answer the questions you ask the most!

DICK SLATER

Former Georgia champion Dick Slater is currently in Florida, where he won his first 50 bouts inside of five minutes, a Florida record. "I'm probably the best thing to happen to Florida since oranges," Dickie claims. Fans who hate Slater's vicious tactics certainly disagree.

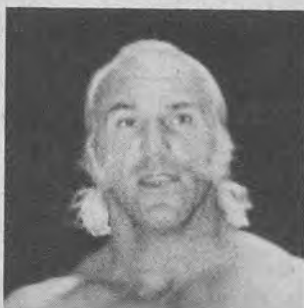


KEN PATERA

Wrestling's self-proclaimed "World's Strongest Human Being" has signed a contract to appear in the Mid-Atlantic region. At first a fan favorite there, he soon turned on partners Paul Jones and Rick Steamboat. Now Mid-Atlantic fans have discovered what WWWF fans have known for some time—Ken Patera is a man to be hated.

HAYSTACKS CALHOUN

The big ol' country boy from Morgans Corner, Arkansas, has decided to take a few matches in the WWWF. "I always receive great support from the fans here," reports 'Stacks. Calhoun has promised fans he will wrestle the most hated rulebreakers in the area—men like Luke Graham, Spiros Arion, and even former champion Superstar Graham.



SUPERSTAR GRAHAM

This former WWWF champion has added to his busy schedule by signing a semi-exclusive contract with Georgia promoters. According to wrestling insiders, Graham is to receive a record amount of money for just a few minutes a month. "If they want the best," Superstar claims, "let them pay for it." As of this writing, Graham is undefeated down South.

INSIDE WRESTLING

24

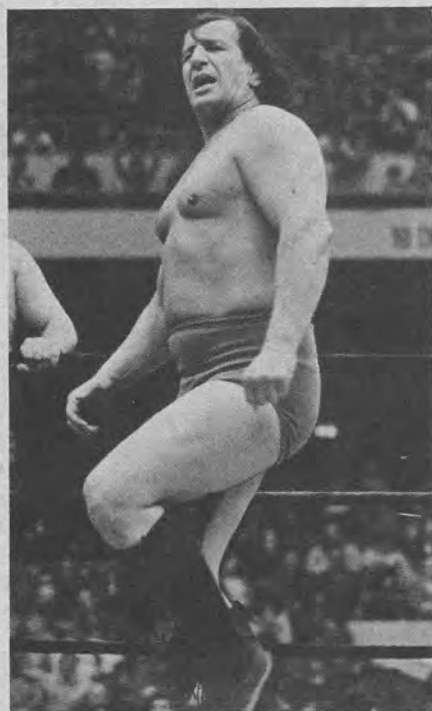
CAPSULE PROFILE

CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW



BELOVED BY FANS Around the world . . . mountain of grappling integrity . . . "I don't believe in wrestling dirty" . . . Strength and speed make him a perennial title contender . . . Is considered an idol to millions of American Indians ("I know if I became a rule-breaker, my people will be ashamed of me.") . . . Though the idea repulses him, he will brawl with the best of them when provoked beyond his stolid tolerance . . . Has wrestled almost every titleholder and, though never victorious, has earned only praise and respect from foes ("I still believe I have the talent to win a belt someday. And I'm determined to do it.") . . . Has accepted challenges from the roughest grapplers but has never flinched despite their vicious maneuvers . . . Willing to sign autographs hours after the conclusion of a match ("I owe everything to my fans.

I'd never consider refusing to sign an autograph.") . . . Been plagued by nagging and often debilitating injuries, but refuses to use this as an excuse . . . His courage and stamina is legendary ("My motto is to never quit because I feel I would be cheating my fans.") . . . Gives hours of his time to charitable drives and donates large sums of money to crippled children's hospitals ("I don't like to talk about my charity work because people will think I'm doing it for publicity. I do it because I care.") . . . He is one of the all-time greats. □



CAPSULE PROFILE PINUP



CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW

Body Slams & Pinfalls

By Dan Shocket



Bob Backlund tries to surrender before facing Superstar Billy Graham, showing intelligence if not courage.

WATCHING BOB BACKLUND wrestle is slightly more uncomfortable than riding a rowboat on a storm-tossed sea after eating two anchovy pizzas. The man is a disgrace to professional sports. One can imagine a baboon looking at this loathsome creature and being relieved at not being human.

Let's ignore the fact Backlund stole the WWF championship from one of the world's greatest wrestlers, Superstar Billy Graham. You had to expect dishonest promoters and corrupt

referees couldn't stand having a man as champion. Sooner or later, they were going to arrange things so their lackey took the belt. Backlund was just following orders. Blaming Backlund for participating in the theft of the century is like blaming an attack dog for biting.

No, the horror of Backlund's championship has nothing to do with how he became champion. But what he's done since becoming champion makes anyone who loves wrestling gag.

From the first moment, Backlund tried to bring the WWF down to his level. His simpering promise of giving Graham a fair chance to get back the belt was disgusting. That's like applauding a crook who says he'll give back a man's money if the man can steal it back from him! However, since most wrestling fans haven't got the brains of a retarded cabbage, they applauded Backlund's "heroic pledge." What can you expect?

From there it gets worse. His championship is as exciting as watching water boil. He has yet to defeat Graham convincingly (because he can't). Although there are hundreds of top grapplers who deserve a chance at the title, few have been given

the chance. Could it be Backlund is smart enough to know all these men can batter him senseless? He may not be a total fool after all, despite what he seems like.

His cloying manner, ignorant statements, and shoddy wrestling would be enough to condemn this refugee from summer camp. But unfortunately there's much more.



Graham captures the young champion in a headlock. Soon, the referee will force Graham to release the hold. Bob gets what he pays for.

Backlund's championship has been riddled with the worst kind of publicity and sentiment. The WWF, crippled by the stupidity of the Sammartino years, was just beginning to understand what excellent

(Continued on page 54)



FEB/69

APR/71

OCT/71

FEB/72

AUG/72

BACK ISSUES OF THE WRESTLER



SEPT/72



OCT/72



JAN/73



JUNE/73



JULY/73



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MAR/74



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ON THE ROAD

with
Michael B. Kape

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THE OLYMPIC
LOS ANGELES

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THE KIEL
ST. LOUIS
COBOY HALL
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MAPLE LEAF
GARDEN
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THE
AMPHITHEATRE
CHICAGO

MIAMI BEACH
AUDITORIUM
MIAMI

SPORTS
DALLAS

THE KIEL
ST. LOUIS

COBOY HALL
DETROIT

BOSTON
GARDEN
BOSTON

THE OMNI
ATLANTA

THE
FAIRGROUNDS
RICHMOND

EASTHAMPTON, NEW YORK—I decided to be the first one in the neighborhood to open up the summer home. At first, I sort of liked the lack of people, but after a while, it became rather boring. A few friends from Studio 54, the “in” New York City disco, dropped by a while ago. Dusty Rhodes was here for a day. Ken Patera made his presence known for a few hours (he was on his way to a party elsewhere). I believe the Hamptons are going to be very active this summer—if we don’t get too many hurricanes (they tend to be real “downers”).

Few people realize that when Billy isn’t boasting, he can be a very charming and ingratiating fellow. Indeed, the outer man reveals little about the inner man.

I know I’ll receive a lot of hate mail for interviewing Superstar Graham. I have seen the letters before; the depth of fan hatred for Graham is unparalleled. But the man is not evil incarnate. Try to remember when he first started. He was not so hated then. And that is when I first encountered Billy Graham. Like I said, he can be a charming fellow when he wants to be.



Superstar Graham is in a reflective mood as he discusses his past and future with Kape. The revelations Graham allowed in this interview show the man to be much more complex than most people assume.

Last night proved to be somewhat interesting. Superstar Billy Graham thundered by. I had been avoiding him since he lost the title to Backlund (ex-champions can be somewhat tedious, going on forever about their plans to regain the belt). Still, Billy Graham is an interesting person to interview, so I decided to center this month’s column on him.

The first ground rule I laid down was that there was to be no talk about how he was going to take the belt away from Bob Backlund. To tell you the truth, I don’t think he can. I don’t want to imply that Billy is without talent. I just think Bobby is going to hold onto the belt for a long time. My hunches about these things are usually correct.

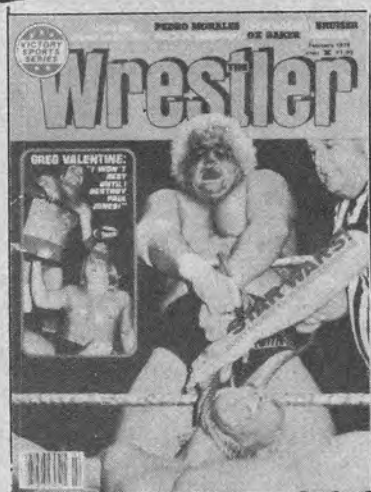
And so we began.

“I know I promised I wouldn’t talk about Backlund,” Graham said, “but I do want to talk about the championship. I have very mixed feelings about it right now. In a way, I regret the day I ever agreed to wrestle Backlund. But in a way I’m glad I don’t have the belt anymore.

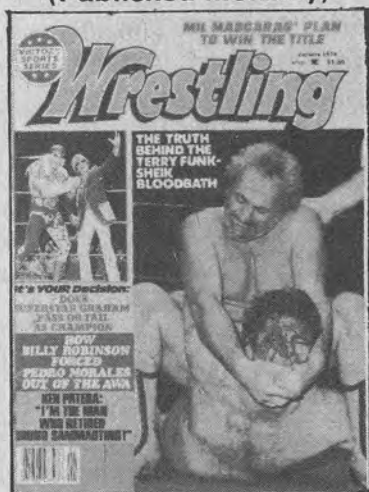
“You don’t know what it’s like to have 27,000 people screaming for your death. Don’t let anyone ever tell you that doesn’t have any effect. It really gets to you. I have always run the risk that one crazed idiot will try to make good his desire. You and I have both heard the stories about fan violence. A champion is especially prone to

(Continued on page 48)

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Rick Steamboat smiles his thanks to the many fans who wrote in urging him to remain a scientific wrestler.

Ricky Has M

BY MICHAEL B. KAPE

IT CAME TO the point where I would dread the daily delivery by the mailman. Every day he brought me hundreds of letters addressed to "Steamboat's Choice," all due to a piece I ran in "On the Road" (March 1978). Neither Ricky nor I ever expected this kind of response.

When I had talked to Steamboat originally, he had expressed a desire to become a rulebreaker. He thought this might lead to greater fame and more money. He asked the fans to help him make up his mind. His final decision would rest on their judgement.

From all over the country, devoted wrestling fans wrote to Rick. Their opinion was nearly unanimous—they wanted him to remain a scientific wrestler.

"At first," said Ricky, "I couldn't believe the volume of

Rick gallantly wails away at Ric Flair during one of their many encounters. Steamboat is one of the few wrestlers who can survive Flair's savagery.

"I'LL NEVER DES

Steamboat Made His Choice:

Fans from all over the country pleaded with Rick Steamboat not to become a rulebreaker. Their thousands of letters convinced him—he will never abandon them. From now on, Rick Steamboat will do everything he can for his fans!

mail. I mean, I knew I had a few fans out there, but I didn't realize it was this many. I can't begin to describe how moved I was that this many people cared about me and my career. Many of the letters were from people who had never seen me wrestle. They wrote in because they were concerned.

"I have made my choice. I'll never desert my fans. I must have been crazy to think I ever would. I'm sorry I even thought about it. But now I know who my friends are. Now I know I have fans who love me."

And there are many people throughout the country who do love Rick Steamboat. Here is a sample of what they wrote:

"When I read about you thinking of changing your ways, I was very upset," said Rick Kotel of Alsip, Illinois. "Although I have never watched you wrestle in person, all the magazines give you a lot of credit. Rick, please stay clean and keep up the good work."

Ric Flair's face reveals his agony as the hated grappler is captured in a perfect Steamboat headlock.



ERT THE FANS!"

"Ricky, I'm not saying be a rulebreaker," wrote Mary Ann Cassady of Stuart, Virginia. "You said if you became a rulebreaker, your fans would leave you in a flash. I don't think they would. I know I wouldn't. I'm behind you all the way. Whether you are a rulebreaker or a scientific wrestler, you are

certainly I would lose my respect for you if you were to become a rulebreaker."

Some of the correspondence brought Ricky to tears. He carefully read each letter he received.

"How could I fight with these people. They all expressed such warm and beautiful sentiments.

me. Their love, their loyalty, their faith that I would make the right decision have humbled me. I am grateful for what the fans across the country have done.

"I admit there are still aspects of being a rulebreaker which intrigue me. If I had gone that route, I would probably have a lot more fame, a lot more money. I would have become notorious throughout the sport. All the other wrestlers would have ended up hating me. I would be rich and glorious.

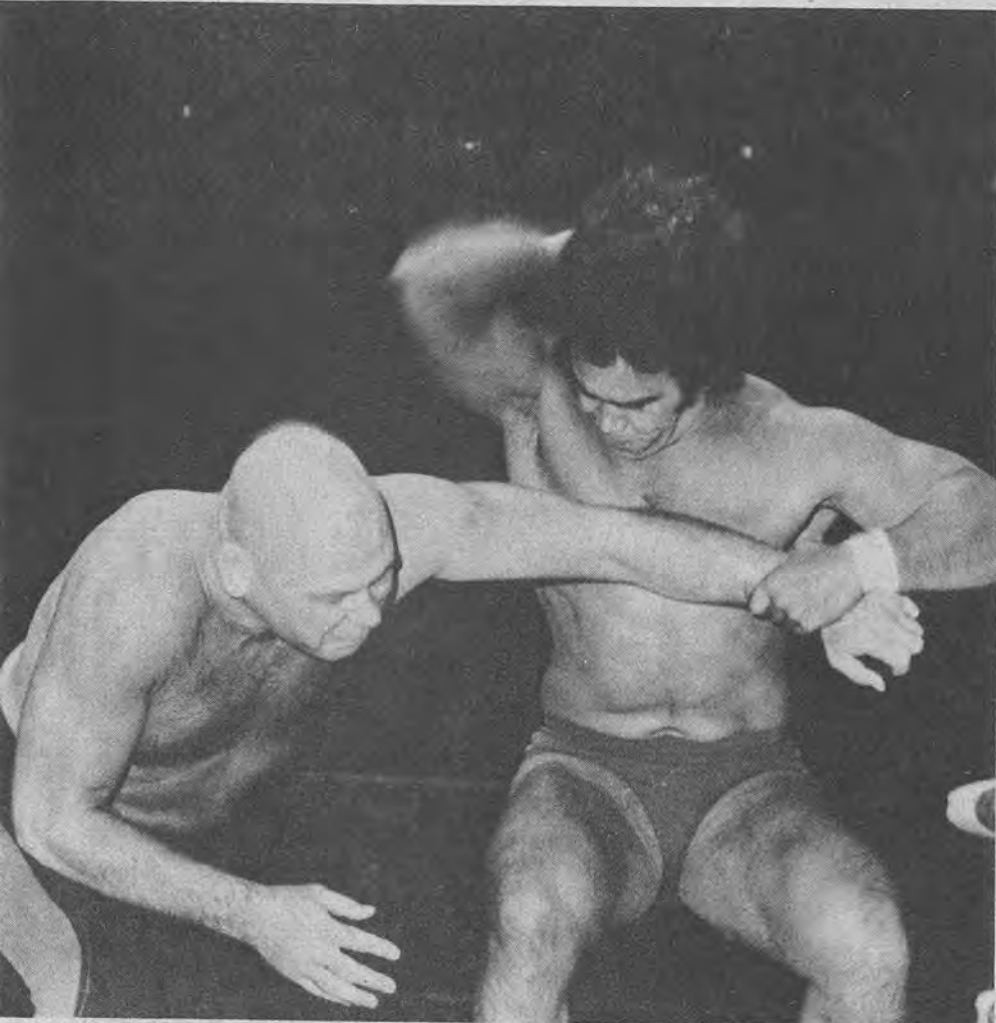
"And I would probably hate my life.

"The fans have saved me from a fate which would have ultimately ruined my life. What man can truthfully say that the fans don't matter? I don't know how Ken Patera managed the change from scientific wrestler to rulebreaker. I imagine he must be a very lonely man."

I'm glad Ricky made the choice he did. It would have been very tough for him as a rulebreaker. He was right about Ken Patera. In private sessions, Ken has admitted to me that he does miss the love of the fans at times. But he will not return to his scientific ways.

For Steamboat, the future looks bright. He has a huge legion of fans willing to support him no matter what he does. They love him, and he respects their opinions. In all my years as a wrestling reporter, I have never seen a man so moved by what the fans wrote. Every person who sent in a letter should be gratified by Ricky's decision.

Look at this episode as an indication of how powerful the fans can be. After all, it is around the fans that this entire sport revolves. Every person who loves wrestling can today be proud of Rick Steamboat and what he has done for the sport. □



Even the dangerous Baron Von Raschke is confounded by Steamboat's superb grappling ability. If Steamboat turned rulebreaker, there is no telling how badly wrestling would suffer from the change.

my favorite and always will be. I just hope you stay a scientific wrestler, please!"

"I am very impressed with your style of wrestling," said Carla Rinocaró of Westfield, New Jersey. "It is not just because you're a gorgeous person (even though you are), but also because you are a superb wrestler. I'm not sure you'd lose me as a fan, but

After reading the letters, I know I can never become a rulebreaker. It would be wrong.

"When I first became a wrestler, I never gave any thought at all to how the fans would react to me. My goal was simply to become the best wrestler I could be.

"From now on, everything I do, I do for my fans. I will never forget what they have shown

NICK BOCKWINKLE'S 1,000 DAYS AS CHAMPION



THE DATE: November 8, 1975. A stunning upset over veteran Verne Gagne. But still the skeptics remained, continued to maintain it was a fluke, a short-lived champion

had emerged and would return to the oblivion many predicted for him.

The year: 1978. And Nick Bockwinkel is still AWA champion. Despite predictions

of wrestlers determined to destroy this upstart, a detested manager and a controversial career, he stands alone atop the federation mountain, a giant of

(Continued on page 50)

When Nick Bockwinkel became AWA champion, no one expected he would keep the belt for long. Now, 1,000 days later, Bockwinkel has succeeded in proving all the experts wrong!

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If you join "The Wonderful World of Pen Pals," you can make new friends throughout the world. And all of your new pen pals will be wrestling fans too! We will print your picture right here in this magazine, and also a little bit of information about who you are. That way, your new pen pals will know something about you even before they start to send you their letters! Just think—you can have the chance to receive mail from all over the world! All you have to do is fill out the coupon below and mail it to us, along with a recent picture. We'll take it from there.

PHOTOS CANNOT BE RETURNED!

PEN PALS DEPT.
Box 48
Rockville Centre, NY 11571

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Hobbies, other interests _____

Favorite Wrestler _____

I like ☐ Good Guys ☐ Bad Guys

I'd Like As My Pen Pal:

☐ Boys ☐ Girls ☐ Anyone

You Have My Permission To Print My
Picture.

Age _____

Signature Required
DO NOT PRINT



KENNETH JAMES (13)
Finger Road
Henderson, TN 38340
Likes baseball. Jerry
Lawler his favorite.
Likes bad guys.
Anyone for pen pals.



JOHN PATELLA (11)
50 Rumson Road
Massapequa, NY 11758
Enjoys baseball. Mil
Mascaras his favorite.
Likes good and bad
guys. Boys for PP's.



MITCH PERRY (14)
1291 Skyline Drive
Daly City, CA 94015
Likes tennis. Pat
Patterson his favorite.
Likes good guys.
Girls for pen pals.



RICKY BENTLEY (10)
207 Beard Street
Decatur, AL 35601
Likes sports. Mr.
Wrestling II his
favorite. Likes
good and bad guys.
Anyone for PP's.



KELVIN JOHNSON (13)
902 Wallis Avenue
Farrell, PA 16121
Enjoys boxing. Billy
Graham his favorite.
Likes good and bad
guys. Boys for PP's.



SHAWN BAILEY (14)
Darrah Street
Richmond, ME 04357
Likes baseball. Andre
the Giant his favorite.
Likes good guys.
Anyone for pen pals.



SCOTT BRAFFORD (7)
Rt. 6 Box 474
Sanford, NC 27330
Likes bikes. Mr.
Wrestling his favorite.
Likes good guys.
Anyone for pen pals.



LISA DAVIS (12)
Route 1
Greer, SC 29651
Rides horses. Wahoo
McDaniel her favorite.
Likes good guys.
Anyone for pen pals.



MARK BRAFFORD (11)
Rt. 6 Box 474
Sanford, NC 27330
Likes to fish. Rick
Steamboat his favorite.
Likes good guys.
Anyone for pen pals.



GEORGE LAMBERTH (14)
Rt. 1 Box 266
Montezuma, GA 31063
Enjoys music. T-Bolt
Patterson his favorite.
Likes good guys.
Anyone for pen pals.



ROBYN REVELS (14)
1121 Hilliard St.
Waycross, GA 31501
Likes football. Rick
Steamboat her favorite.
Likes good and bad
guys. Boys for pen pals.



LENWOOD RICHARDSON (10)
Rt. 2 Box 282F
St. George, SC 29477
Likes sports. Rick
Steamboat his favorite.
Likes good guys.
Anyone for pen pals.

N PALS



TIENNA FRANKLIN (15)
115 N. Virginia
Carrollton, MO 64633
Collects rings. Ted
DeBiase her favorite.
Likes good guys.
Anyone for pen pals.



SCOTT PICCO (10)
RFD 3
Derry, NH 03038
Enjoys basketball. Peter
Maivia his favorite.
Likes good guys. Anyone
for pen pals.



VICKIE WOLF (9)
4382 Hayesville
Salem, OR 97303
Rides horses. Moondog
Mayne her favorite.
Likes good and bad
guys. Anyone for PP's.



NINA SHEPARD (14)
RR 1
Malcom, IA 50157
Likes softball. Jerry
Oates her favorite.
Likes good guys.
Boys for pen pals.



COLLEEN LONG (10)
Rt. 1 Box 241
Kingsville, OH 44048
Likes animals. Jay
Strongbow her favorite.
Likes good guys.
Anyone for pen pals.



QUENTON LINEAR (11)
4036 Cedar Grove Cres.
Chesapeake, VA 23321
Likes mysteries. Wahoo
McDaniel his favorite.
Likes good and bad
guys. Anyone for PP's.



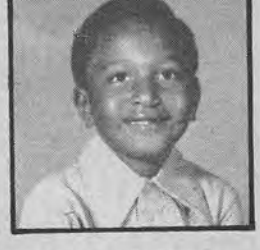
BUDDY FINDLEY (13)
P.O. Box 4004
Pt. Wentworth, GA 31407
Likes sports. Dino
Bravo his favorite.
Likes good and bad
guys. Anyone for PP's.



NETTIE JEFFCOAT (11)
2115 Congaree Drive
Cayce, SC 29033
Enjoys tennis. Mighty
Igor her favorite.
Likes good guys.
Boys for pen pals.



STEVE McKIE (12)
P.O. Box 1537
Americus, GA 31709
Likes football. Mr.
Wrestling II his favorite.
Likes good guys. Boys
for pen pals.



JAMES REEVES (9)
2011 9th St. N.E.
Winter Haven, FL 33880
Enjoys football. Skip
Young his favorite.
Likes good guys.
Boys for pen pals.



MASON SIKES (13)
8844 Bliss Road
Riverview, FL 33569
Rides motorcycles. Bruno
Sammartino his favorite.
Likes good guys.
Girls for pen pals.



ANTOINETTE SMITH (13)
684 Plywood Street
Orangeburg, SC 29115
Rides bikes. Mighty
Igor her favorite.
Likes good guys.
Anyone for pen pals.



BILL BRUNS (10)
618 Mellowood Drive
Indianapolis, IN 46217
Collects coins. Dick
the Bruiser his favorite.
Likes good and bad
guys. Boys for pen pals.



DAVE GROSSI (14)
193 Union Avenue
New Rochelle, NY 10801
Collects magazines. Jay
Strongbow his favorite.
Likes good guys. Girls
for pen pals.



CHRIS DYE (13)
1052 N. Shem Drive
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464
Likes football. Andre
the Giant his favorite.
Likes good and bad
guys. Girls for PP's.



LEN MILLER (12)
106 Ann Avenue
Sulphur, LA 70663
Likes sports. Jose
Lothario his favorite.
Likes good guys.
Girls for pen pals.



DAVID BROWN (14)
1691 Crucible Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15205
Collects books. Bruno
Sammartino his favorite.
Likes good guys. Boys
for pen pals.



PATRICK O'MALLEY (12)
78-21 90 Road
Woodhaven, NY 11421
Enjoys hockey. Bruno
Sammartino his favorite.
Likes good guys. Boys
for pen pals.



CHRIS RIVELLESE (12)
5 James Street
Stanhope, NJ 07874
Collects magazines. George
Steele his favorite. Likes
bad guys. Anyone for PP's.



TAMMY PARTIN (11)
P.O. Box 98
Scranton, SC 29591
Likes baseball. Ric
Flair her favorite.
Likes good guys. Anyone
for pen pals.

TOP WRESTLE

YOUR QUESTION

Do you have a question which concerns all of wrestling? Well, each month in **INSIDE WRESTLING**, the sport's greatest stars will answer a question sent in by a reader. If you wish to have your question answered by the stars, send it to: **ASK THE STARS, INSIDE WRESTLING, Box 48, Rockville Centre, N.Y. 11571**

The "Question of the Month" is:

"What do you think of new WWWF champion Bob Backlund?"

**Submitted by:
Frank Masella;
Scarsdale,
New York**



ERNIE LADD

"You know, wrestling has really fallen into a sad state now that Bob Backlund is WWWF champ. The man knows nothing. He has no right to hold the belt. He's living on borrowed time. Someone is going to win that belt soon."



GREG GAGNE

"When Bob was in the AWA, I knew he was destined to be a champion. He is going to rule the WWWF for a long time. He is good. Indeed, he may prove to be one of the best ever."



PAUL JONES

"I have been impressed by Backlund's style from the first night I saw him in action. There's no doubt about it. He is one of the best men in the sport. He will hold onto the belt for many years. Who can beat him?"



NICK BOCKWINKLE

"I cannot deny that the kid is good. In fact, he is very good (and it hurts me to say this). He will probably be WWWF champion for about three years. Then someone will come along who will take the belt away."

RS ANSWER OF THE MONTH



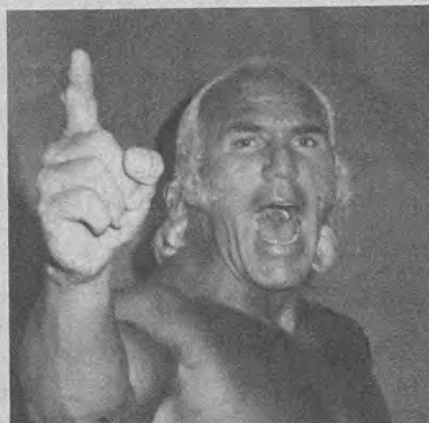
HARLEY RACE

"To me, Bob Backlund is a nothing, a big zero. I've wrestled him. I'm not particularly impressed. He couldn't last five minutes against a good wrestler. He won't be champion very long. I predict it."



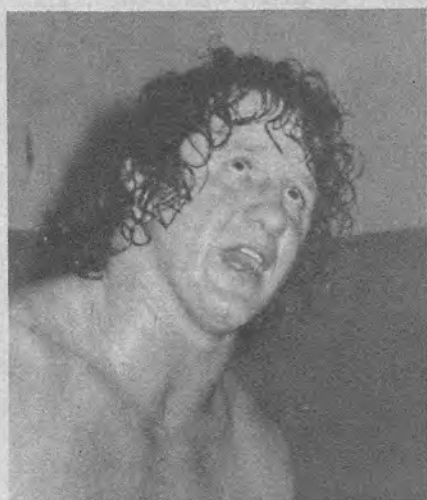
BRUNO SAMMARTINO

"Bob Backlund is a very smart wrestler, but he certainly does have a lot to learn. If he doesn't start learning how to deal with rulebreakers, he may not be able to enjoy a long championship reign."



SUPERSTAR GRAHAM

"The man is a fraud. That's all there is to it. He has no right to be champion, and everyone knows it. The next time I get in the ring with him, he will leave without his belt, and probably without his life, too!"



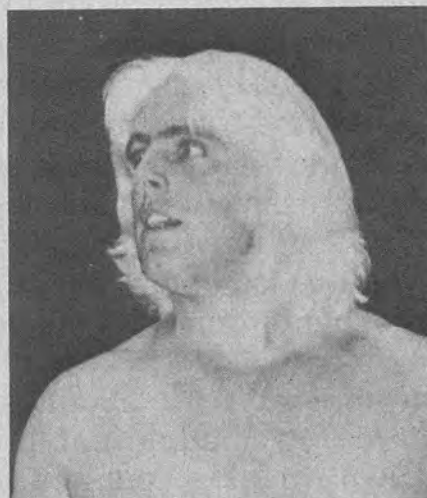
TERRY FUNK

"Six months from now, you won't be able to find anybody willing to admit they ever knew Bob Backlund. He has no talent. He can't hold onto a title long. He doesn't have what it takes to be a champion."



ANDRE THE GIANT

"Some people say Bob Backlund represents the best of the next generation of wrestlers. That may be true. Personally, I think Bob will hold the WWWF belt for at least five years, maybe more."



RIC FLAIR

"That an imbecile like Bob Backlund can be champion of anything amazes me. But you know, I predicted something like this would happen if they didn't give me a shot at the title. Maybe I'll go north and take it from him." □



Matt Brock's **PLAIN SPEAKING**

HARTFORD: The riot started about an hour after the matches were over. Only a few wrestlers were left in the arena. Superstar Billy Graham was sitting in his street clothes, depressed about failing once again to take the WWWF title from Bob Backlund. Those present say he very casually got up, walked over to a locker, and started kicking it. I walked in, along with five other people, after hearing the commotion. By the time of my arrival, Graham had knocked in or thrown down at least 20 lockers, smashed a training table, and was trying to rip the clothes hooks off the wall. He did better than he expected. His might not only tore off the metal hooks, but wrenched off the 2x4 they were nailed onto. He took the wood and stumbled around for a moment. Then he saw his reflection in the mirror and stood transfixed for about a second. Suddenly, an abominable scream wrenched from his soul and he hurled the plank into the mirror, shattering the glass into a thousand pieces. Exhausted, Graham sank to the floor. Some said he cried. Others said he just sort of melted, as if the force of the man departed his body. After about a minute, when nobody moved nor was any sound made, Graham got up and left the arena. I followed, but he went right to his hotel without incident. I went to the hotel bar.



SUPERSTAR BILLY GRAHAM

MINNEAPOLIS: I've known Ray Stevens for years, yet the essence of the man is still a mystery. Early on, I believed he was the personification of evil, a man who just liked to batter people for the fun of it. Then, very late one night, in a place neither of us should have patronized, Stevens told me about a woman he once knew, at an age when a man can still

Harder than nails, veteran wrestling reporter Matt Brock has logged more miles covering wrestling than any other journalist. Every month Matt will travel to the sport's hotbeds, reporting everything he sees without fear or favor

believe in perfection. She didn't want him to be a wrestler. He didn't want to be anything else. Stevens said they parted over the issue. A couple of years later, he discovered her married to another wrestler. They seemed very happy. I drank to his misfortune and condemned all women. The next afternoon, Stevens said the story was a lie, just something he made up to pass the time. I believe he made up the story. It doesn't sound real, but it does sound like the way Stevens thinks about life.

INDIANAPOLIS: Some men are born to certain professions. There's something incomplete and awkward about them away from their work. Bruno Sammartino is one of those men. See him in wrestling trunks, under arena lights, battling some opponent, and there is perfect harmony between man and environment. Outside the arena, Sammartino would be lost in a crowd if he didn't always seem somehow slightly out of place. Someone once said that happens to any man whose profession puts him in the public eye. He went on to say that's why so many writers drink away from their typewriters. Discomfort in uncomfortable surroundings drives them to lose their uneasiness in alcohol. Sammartino has learned to live with his uneasiness without drinking. To each his own.

MIAMI: A very rich man once sang, "Love is all you need." Ivan Putski knows better. He's one of the most beloved men in wrestling. That and \$2 will get him a scotch on the rocks. Putski has battled the toughest men around, one night after

another, all to earn the love of his fans. An easier, smarter schedule might have let him be champion. A man has to protect himself to succeed. Putski never protected himself. Some people say he's beginning to change, starting to pick and choose his opponents intelligently. Others scoff that it's too little too late. Vance Trimble once said life is a series of missed chances, but it's never too late. Maybe he told Ivan Putski.

ST. LOUIS: Terry Funk is struggling to get his title back from Harley Race. Terry is better off without it. There are men who are doomed by life to be outsiders, reckless desperados who can live only in the moment. Terry is one of these. To expect him to be champion, a man who has to worry about his future, is to destroy the very essence of the man. Race, for all his supposed bravado, is at heart a company man. He sees himself a hero of the home office, a titleholder dedicated to making money. Funk makes legends. It depends on who you are as to which you think is more important.

ATLANTA: They gave Paul Jones a standing ovation. He deserved it. He wasn't happy, though. He may never be happy. Even with a championship, there will be something missing. Some men, struggling toward perfection, delight in new accomplishments and challenges. Others, like Jones, see his mortality as an endless ordeal, constant struggle without any hope of the final success. Getting there is all the fun. For Jones, there is no fun. He lives with this curse without complaint. I take a drink and envy Keats, Eliot, and Milton. □

NEWS FROM THE

If you would like your area of the country represented in these reports, while also being officially credited with your own by-line, send us reports of the matches you attend. You will have the thrill of seeing your name in an internationally known magazine while at the same time helping to improve the quality of wrestling in your area. So why not give it a try? You will be glad you did!

Send your reports to: Correspondent Editor, Box 48, Rockville Centre, N.Y. 11571

WHEELING, W. VA.

By Bill Jackson



**SUPERSTAR GRAHAM
vs.
DOMINIC DeNUCCI**



Superstar Billy Graham and Dominic DeNucci engaged in a wide-open brawl which forced Graham to pull out every vicious rulebreaking trick in order to finally defeat DeNucci, much to the dismay of the fans.

OTHER BOUTS: Chief Peter Maivia and Stan "The Man" Stasiak battled to a draw . . . Maivia filled in for the absent Ivan Putski and won on a disqualification over Mr. Fuji.

GREENSBORO, N.C.

By Horace H. Terry Jr.



**TIM WOODS
vs.
BLACKJACK MULLIGAN**



The United States heavyweight title was at stake as Tim "Mr. Wrestling" Woods challenged Blackjack Mulligan. Employing masterful maneuvers, Mr. Wrestling won the bout and captured the crown.

OTHER BOUTS: Greg Valentine and Ric Flair won a lumberjack match over Wahoo McDaniel and Ole Anderson . . . Dick Murdoch beat Baron Von Raschke . . . Paul Jones and Rick Steamboat beat Mr. X I and II.

MARIETTA, GA.

By Lynn Cantrell



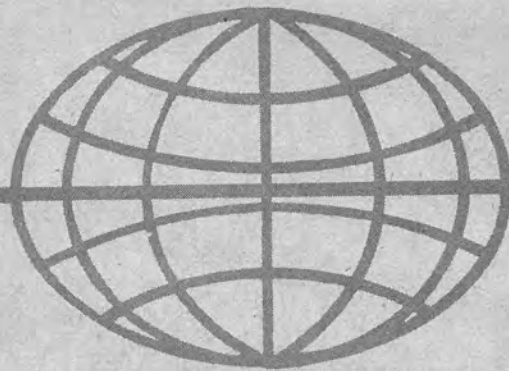
**TOMMY RICH
vs.
ABDULLAH THE BUTCHER**



Young Tommy Rich displayed extraordinary courage as he battered Abdullah the Butcher into a bloody pulp. Rich withstood all of Abdullah's treachery and responded with grace and intelligence.

OTHER BOUTS: Dusty Rhodes and Mr. Wrestling II battled Stan Hansen and Ole Anderson with the result a double disqualification . . . Helmut and Wolfgang Schmidt defeated Tony Atlas and Raymond Rougeau.

WRESTLING CAPITALS



SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

By Tony Terranova



**BOB BACKLUND
vs.
KEN PATERA**



WWWF champion Bob Backlund successfully defended his belt against the cowardly violence of Ken Patera. After Backlund used his atomic backdrop, Patera ran through the ropes and left the ring. **OTHER BOUTS:** Professor Tanaka and Mr. Fuji defeated Peter Maivia and Chief Jay Strongbow . . . The Golden Terror lost on a disqualification to S.D. Jones . . . Ted Adams stomped Joe Turko.

ORLANDO, FLA.

By Tony Garamella



**DUSTY RHODES
vs.
BOBBY DUNCUM**



Dusty Rhodes and Bobby Duncum tangled in a ferocious steel cage match. Both men were covered in blood with Duncum trying to escape. Rhodes finished Duncum off with an elbowsmash to win the match.

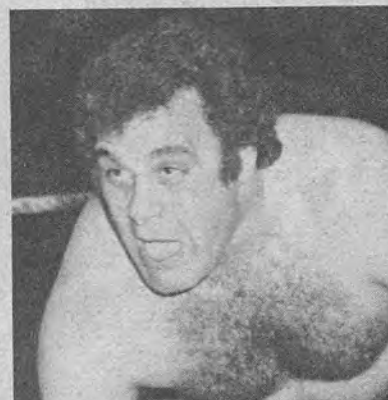
OTHER BOUTS: Mike Graham and Steve Keirn retained their U.S. tag team title with a disqualification victory over Mr. Sato and Mr. Saito . . . Dick Slater kept his Southern belt with a win over Rocky Johnson.

OMAHA, NEB.

By Mike Cisler



**HAYSTACKS CALHOUN
vs.
ANGELO MOSCA**



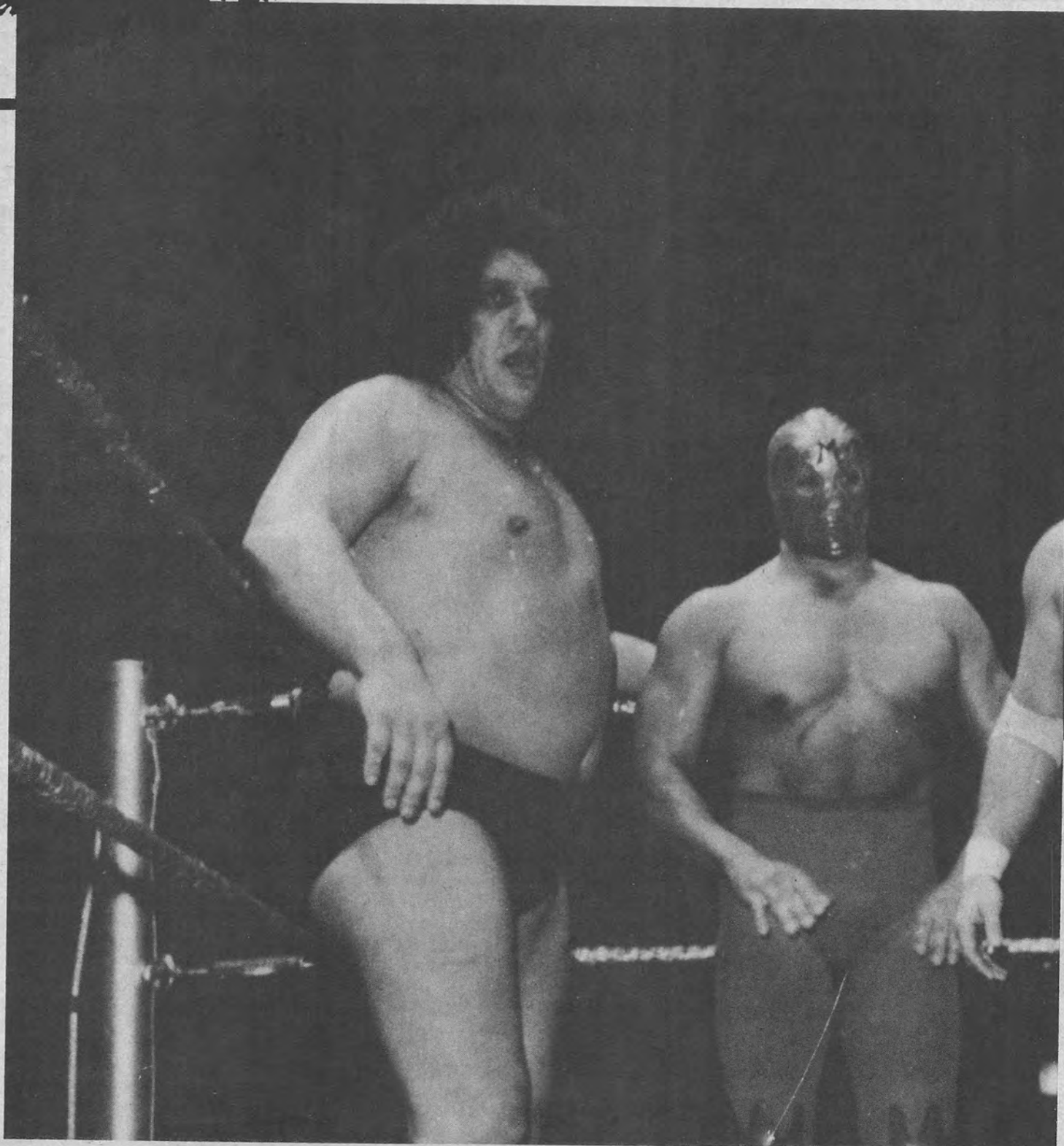
In a frantic and bloody brawl, Haystacks Calhoun won over Angelo Mosca by disqualification. After several minutes of repeated treachery, the referee had no choice but to disqualify Mosca.

OTHER BOUTS: Greg Gagne drew with Bob Orton Jr. . . . Jim Brunzell triumphed over Bobby Heenan . . . Pat Patterson was victorious in a 16-man Battle Royal which included such grapplers as Ray Stevens, Calhoun, and Brunzell.

Mosca

**Andre,
Dusty, and
Mascaras:**

WHY O LEAVE



ONE MAN MUST THIS TEAM FOREVER

PHOTOS BY ELLIOT LEVY

INDIVIDUALLY, OR EVEN as a duo, the awesome strength is formidable and intimidating. United in a trio of power, their potential struck fear in opponents. And reluctance. Sudden cancellations. Alleged injuries. Very simply, no one wants to wrestle them.

"You kidding me? Me and my two buddies aren't going to get into a ring with them. They're unbeatable," said one wrestler, an infamous rulebreaker whose deceit obviously can't conceal his fear.

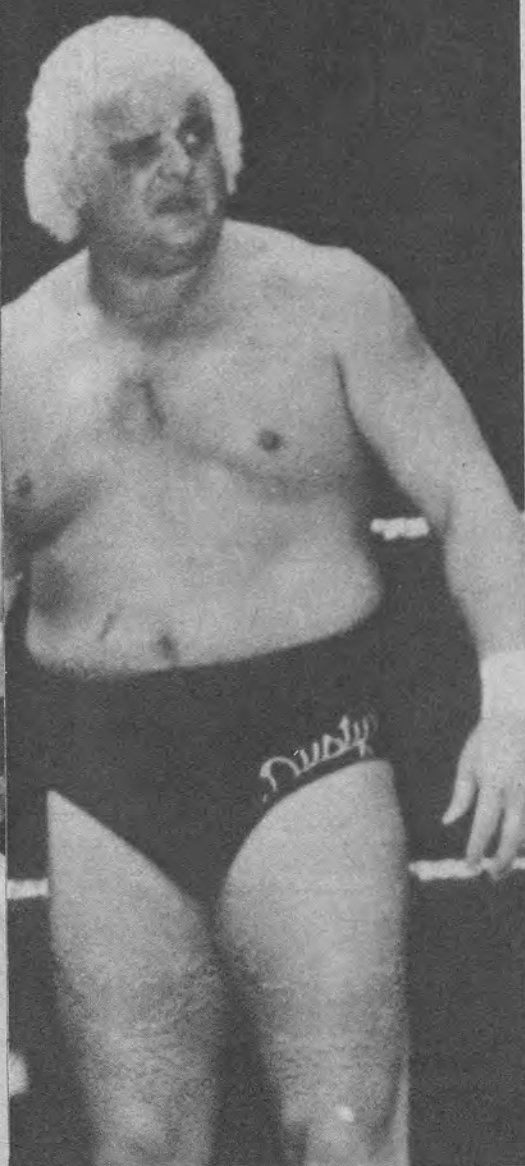
There's just something about those three men teamed together, the blending of their talents, which makes them impossible to defeat," said a promoter plagued by terrified phone calls requesting the breaking of contracts.

Who are these three men? Consistent with their numbers,

(Continued on page 56)



Andre the Giant sends Ken Patera to the canvas early in the match. Andre teamed with Mil Mascaras and Dusty Rhodes to form the perfect team. No three-man team dares to wrestle them. It's easy to understand why.



Everyone cheered when Andre the Giant, Dusty Rhodes and Mil Mascaras announced they were forming a team. Unfortunately, this team could never stay together. At last the real story behind the departure of one of these wrestling greats can be revealed to the world

INSIDE WRESTLING'S

OFFICIAL RATINGS

These Ratings Are Compiled With The Assistance Of Top Wrestlers, Promoters, And Reporters. They Are Universally Accepted As Official

World Wide Wrestling Federation



Champion:
BOB BACKLUND



1—SUPERSTAR GRAHAM

American Wrestling Association



Champion: NICK BOCKWINKLE



1—RAY STEVENS

National Wrestling Alliance



Champion: HARLEY RACE



1—DUSTY RHODES

Most Popular Wrestlers



1—DUSTY RHODES



2—ANDRE THE GIANT

Most Hated Wrestlers



1—KEN PATERA



2—RIC FLAIR

Tag Teams



1—RIC FLAIR & GREG VALENTINE





2—DUSTY RHODES



3—TATSUMI
FUJINAMI



4—SPIROS ARION

- 5—MIL MASCARAS
- 6—LUKE GRAHAM
- 7—KEN PATERA
- 8—DINO BRAVO
- 9—PETER MAIVIA
- 10—CHIEF JAY
STRONGBOW



2—VERNE GAGNE



3—BILLY
ROBINSON



4—LARRY HENNIG

- 5—GREG GAGNE
- 6—BOB ORTON JR.
- 7—JIM BRUNZELL
- 8—RUFUS R. JONES
- 9—SUPER
DESTROYER
- 10—ANGELO MOSCA



2—JACK BRISCO



3—RIC FLAIR

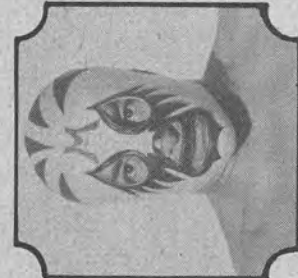


4—DICK SLATER

- 5—TIM "MR.
WRESTLING" WOODS
- 6—TERRY FUNK
- 7—PAUL JONES
- 8—RICK
STEAMBOAT
- 9—STAN HANSEN
- 10—DORY FUNK JR.



3—BOB BACKLUND



4—MIL MASCARAS



5—RICK
STEAMBOAT

- 6—MR. WRESTLING
II
- 7—IVAN PUTSKI
- 8—BILLY
ROBINSON
- 9—PAUL JONES
- 10—WAHOO
McDANIEL



3—STAN HANSEN



4—SUPERSTAR
GRAHAM



5—GREG
VALENTINE

- 6—DICK SLATER
- 7—SPIROS ARION
- 8—KILLER KARL
KOX
- 9—BOBBY DUNCUM
- 10—NICK
BOCKWINKLE



2—GREG GAGNE &
JIM BRUNZELL



3—DINO BRAVO &
DOMINIC DeNUCCI



4—RICK STEAM-
BOAT & PAUL JONES

5—STEVE KEIRN &
MIKE GRAHAM

6—JACK & JERRY
BRISCO

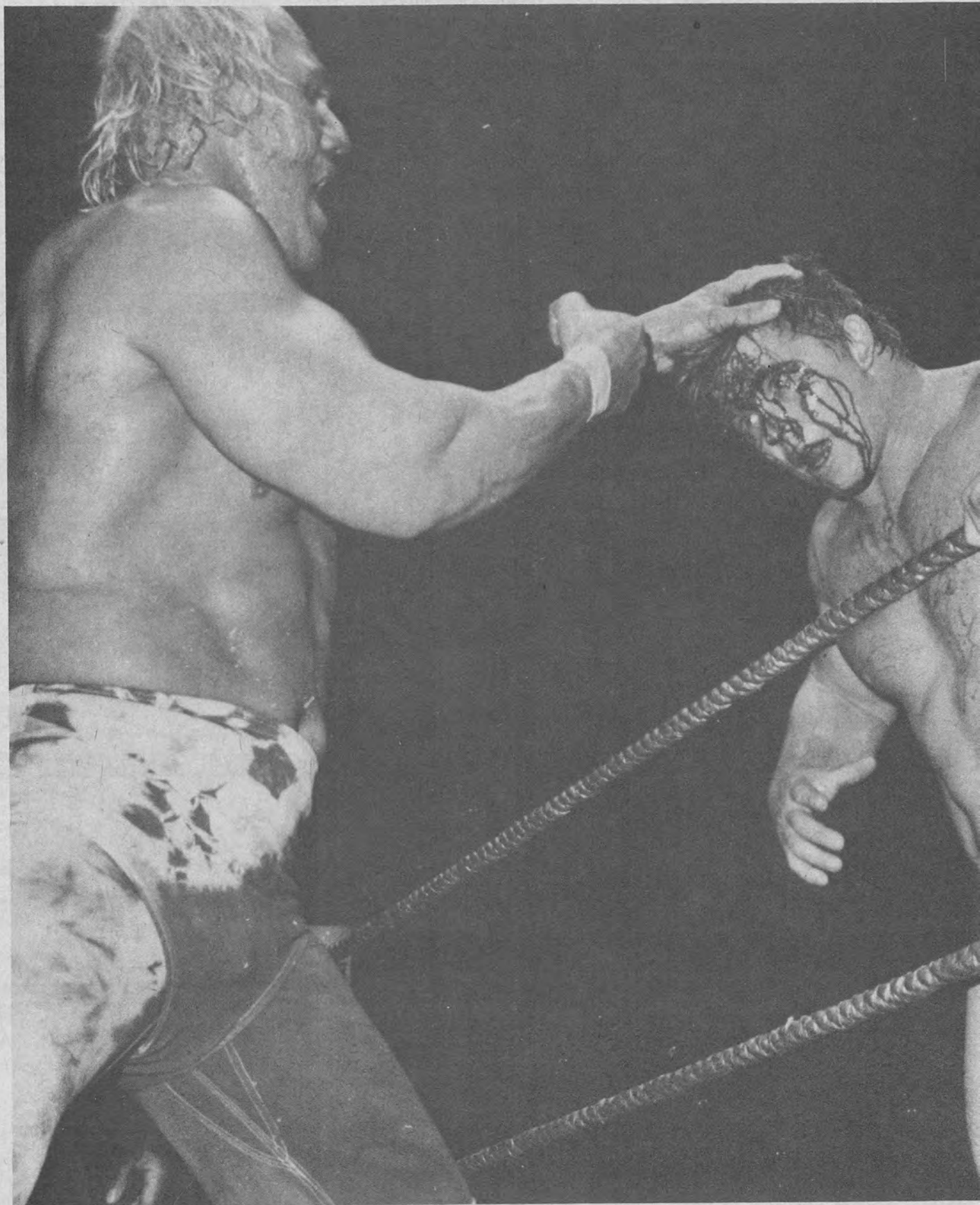
7—THE LUMBER-
JACKS

8—MR. SATO &
MR. SATO

9—THE VALIANT
BROTHERS

10—KILLER BROOKS
& LEROY BROWN

BOB BACKLU



ND LEARNS

A bloody and battered Bob Backlund is almost helpless as Superstar Billy Graham opens a bloody gash even wider!

THE BLOODY HORROR OF BEING CHAMPION

PHOTOS BY ELLIOT LEVY

The first rematch between Superstar Graham and WWWF champion Bob Backlund was more brutal than either man expected it would be. This proved to be the roughest, bloodiest match in the young grappler's career!

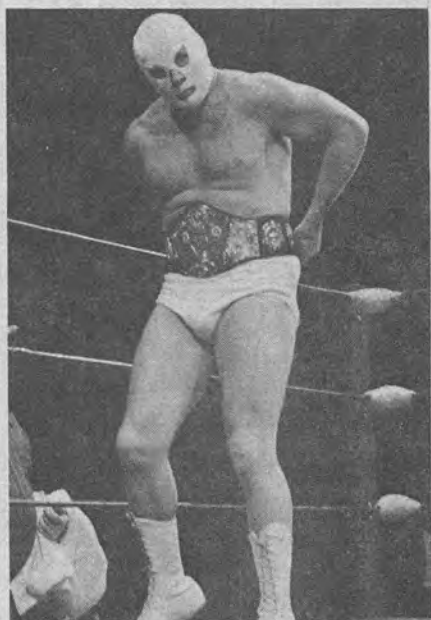
IT IS DIFFICULT to say how deeply Bob Backlund was wounded in his rematch against Superstar Billy Graham. The facial gashes, deep and bloody, which prompted the referee to stop the contest, will produce lifelong scars. That is a stunning fact for Backlund, who had somehow managed to keep his handsome features intact through his riotous struggle to the top.

Yet scars upon the flesh gradually dissolve into slender white lines, unattractive, permanent, but they can be disregarded. It is this combination of being hurt, really hurt badly, for the first time in his career, plus the possible emotional effects, that will determine Backlund's future behavior.

Will the memory of that gory
(Continued on page 62)

NAMES MAKI

One of wrestling's most underrated talents just pulled off one of the biggest upsets in the sport. **TIM "MR. WRESTLING" WOODS** defeated **BLACKJACK MULLIGAN** for the United States Heavyweight Championship! Woods, who went into the match a 5-1 underdog, used scientific tactics throughout the match, finally capturing the big Texan in a



MR. WRESTLING

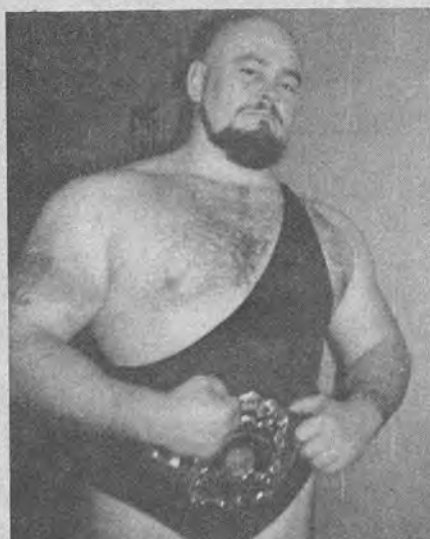
reverse cradle to win. The new champion's first major defense comes up soon. He will be pitted against "Nature Boy" **RIC FLAIR**. Flair, so confident he can overthrow Woods without much trouble, has agreed to have his head shaved in the middle of the ring if he does not win the title from him!

DUSTY RHODES has made it official. He has sent a formal challenge in writing to WWF champion **BOB BACKLUND**. If



DUSTY RHODES

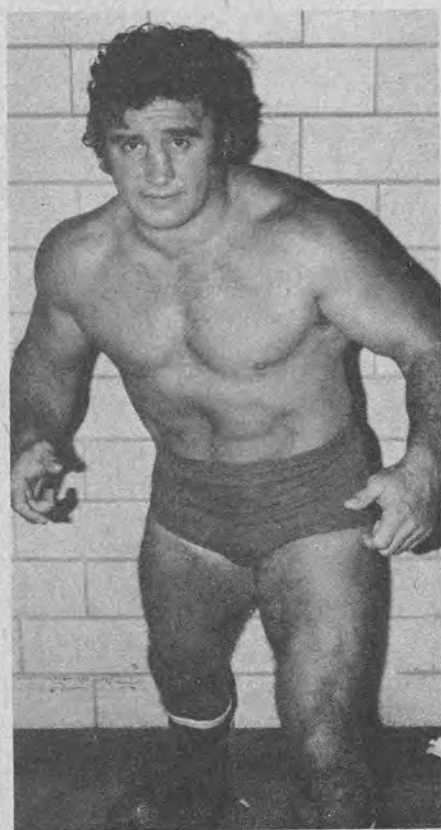
the match is to be made now, it's all up to Bob and the WWF matchmaking committee... **IVAN KOLOFF** hired a prominent New York City lawyer to help get him reinstated in the Florida area. Koloff was barred from wrestling in the state several months ago due to his refusal to stop interfering in matches on behalf of his friends...



IVAN KOLOFF

After wrestling **TERRY FUNK**, the man he defeated for the NWA title, champion **HARLEY RACE** notes, "Funk is in the best shape of his life, but I still had no trouble at all with him."

Manager **BUCK ROBLEY** refuses to let his proteges, **BRUISER BOB SWEETAN** and **ALEXIS SMIRNOFF**, wrestle the team of **KEN LUCAS** and **KEVIN SULLIVAN** a second time. "Wrestling them was a damn waste of our valuable time," Robley says. "Good competition must be getting scarce these days if Lucas and Sullivan are all that's available..." The Mid-Atlantic television belt is around the waist of **JOHNNY WEAVER** after his victory over the despised **BARON VON RASCHKE**... **TONY**



TONY CHARLES

N' NEWS

Bill Apter
reporting...

CHARLES won the NWA junior heavyweight title from NELSON ROYAL. But moments after the decision was announced, the referee ordered the belt returned to Royal due to a technicality. Tony promptly grabbed the referee and gave him a devastating piledriver! The NWA has smacked Tony with a \$1,000 fine for his actions and suspended him from wrestling Royal for at least 60 days.

AWA champion NICK BOCKWINKLE, and his manager BOBBY HEENAN, ventured to



**NICK BOCKWINKLE
AND BOBBY HEENAN**

Georgia where Nick defended his championship against MR. WRESTLING II. According to Heenan, "The masked freak begged us to come to Georgia because he couldn't get up the dough for the airfare to an AWA

state. We felt sorry for the poor guy. So rather than pay his way to come to us, we took a trip to Georgia to show his fans just how



MR. WRESTLING II



BOB ROOP

bad he can look against a great champion."... BOB ROOP wants to wrestle a handicap match against ROCKY JOHNSON, PEDRO MORALES and IVAN PUTSKI. Roop states that they can all be in action at the same time and he will still defeat them within 10 minutes.

Veteran mat observers in the south suggest you keep your eyes



PETER MAIVIA

on rookie TERRY GIBBS. He is showing marked improvement in match after match and could be destined for a major championship... ANGELO MOSCA must dread the day he agreed to wrestle PETER MAIVIA in a Samoan strap match. Maivia rendered Mosca a helpless, bloody wreck in less than five minutes!... CHRIS TOLOS continues to wrestle in Toronto on a regular basis while brother JOHN TOLOS is terrorizing opponents in Hawaii... As reported here some time ago, KEN PATERA was wrestling as a fan favorite in the Mid-Atlantic states. But not any longer! Ken, paired with PAUL JONES and RICK STEAMBOAT during a six-man tag team match, double-crossed Rick and Paul and helped their opponents beat them senseless.

Southern champion DICK SLATER made an appearance at New York's Madison Square Garden and claims that it was his name on the bill that sold out the
(Continued on page 59)

HOTSEAT

IVAN KOLOFF: “THEY’VE FOUND THE ONLY WAY TO STOP ME FROM BEING CHAMPION!”

THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS
GO on and on: former WWWF champion, many regional titles, numerous victories over the world's best grapplers, and the respect of wrestlers everywhere. He is feared by all who must face him. He is at the peak of his abilities. Superb skills match veteran cunning. He is Ivan Koloff.

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY
DAN SHOCKET

Q: Welcome to the “Hotseat,” Ivan.

A: Get it over with.

Q: You’re the one who asked for it.

A: Koloff have no choice. They may have blacklisted me from getting a title shot, but it’ll take a gun to keep me quiet. Koloff want world to know promoters all over country have conspired to keep me

from getting chance at major title. I want world to know.

Q: Do you have any proof?

A: Proof! What the hell do you need proof for? Koloff haven’t

“

Harley Race runs whenever I’m around. Nick Bockwinkel refuses to meet me, and Bob Backlund has it written in his contract that he will never wrestle me.

”

had a shot at major title since Bruno Sammartino match. I won, too, but corrupt judges took title. Now, despite fact everyone says Koloff best around, I can’t get shot at title.

Harley Race runs whenever I’m around, Nick Bockwinkel refuses to meet me, and Bob Backlund has it written in his contract that he will never wrestle me.

Q: Do you have proof of that?

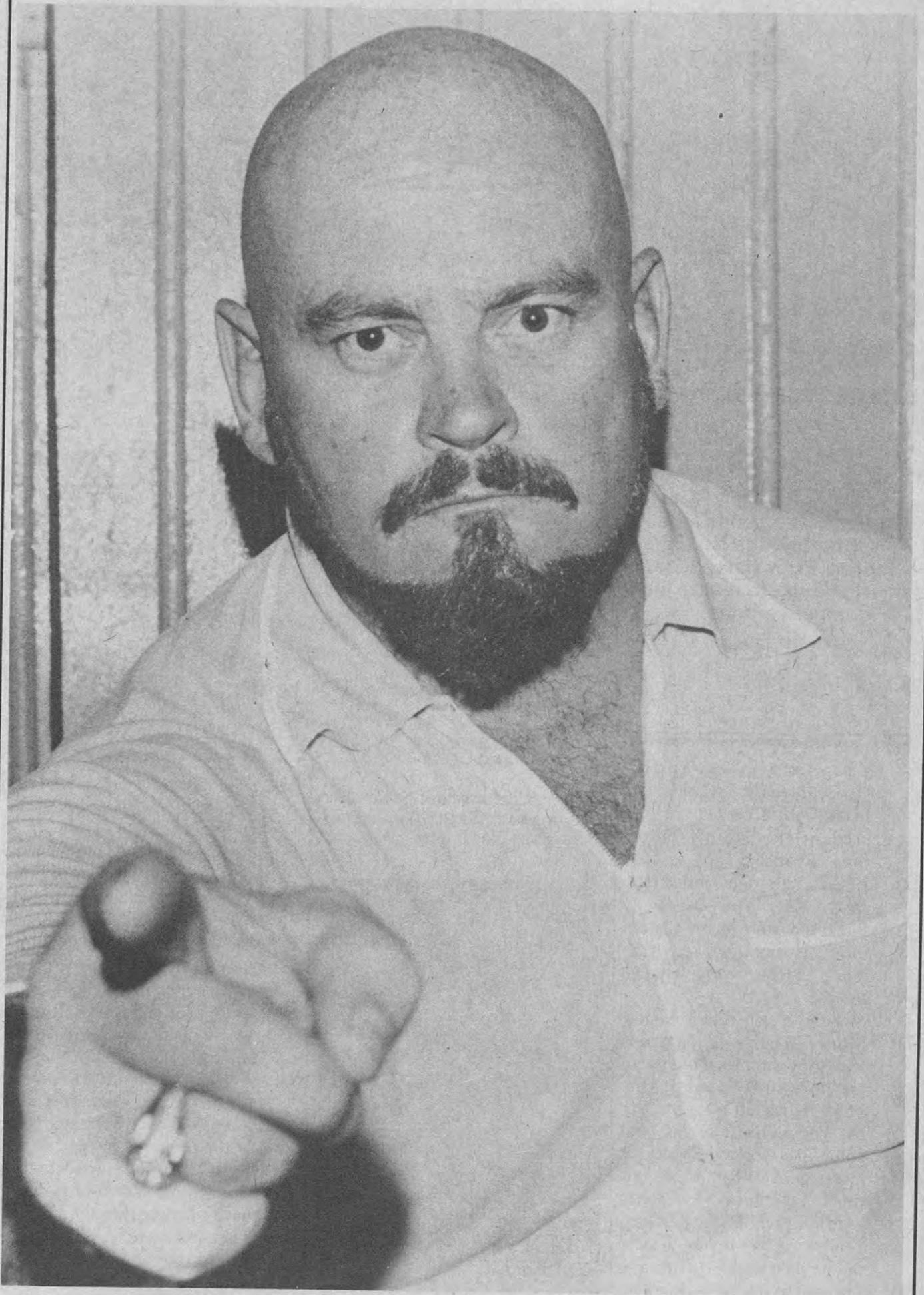
A: Koloff hear it from friends.

Q: You have friends in the promoters’ offices?

A: Koloff have friends all over. Maybe not friends, but people who think it healthy idea to stay on my good side.

Q: Is there any way you can combat this?

A: I’ve consulted a few lawyers, but they say beating blacklist is harder than describing red to a blind man. The only way Koloff can beat this thing is have the fans demand I get chance. Have them write to promoters, make them insist I get title shot. Any champion who hasn’t wrestled me is only





“

Anyone who sends letter supporting me isn't a moron. They have to be smart enough to realize just must be done.

”

a paper champ. I'm Number One contender in anybody's book. Just look at my credentials. Koloff better than anyone!

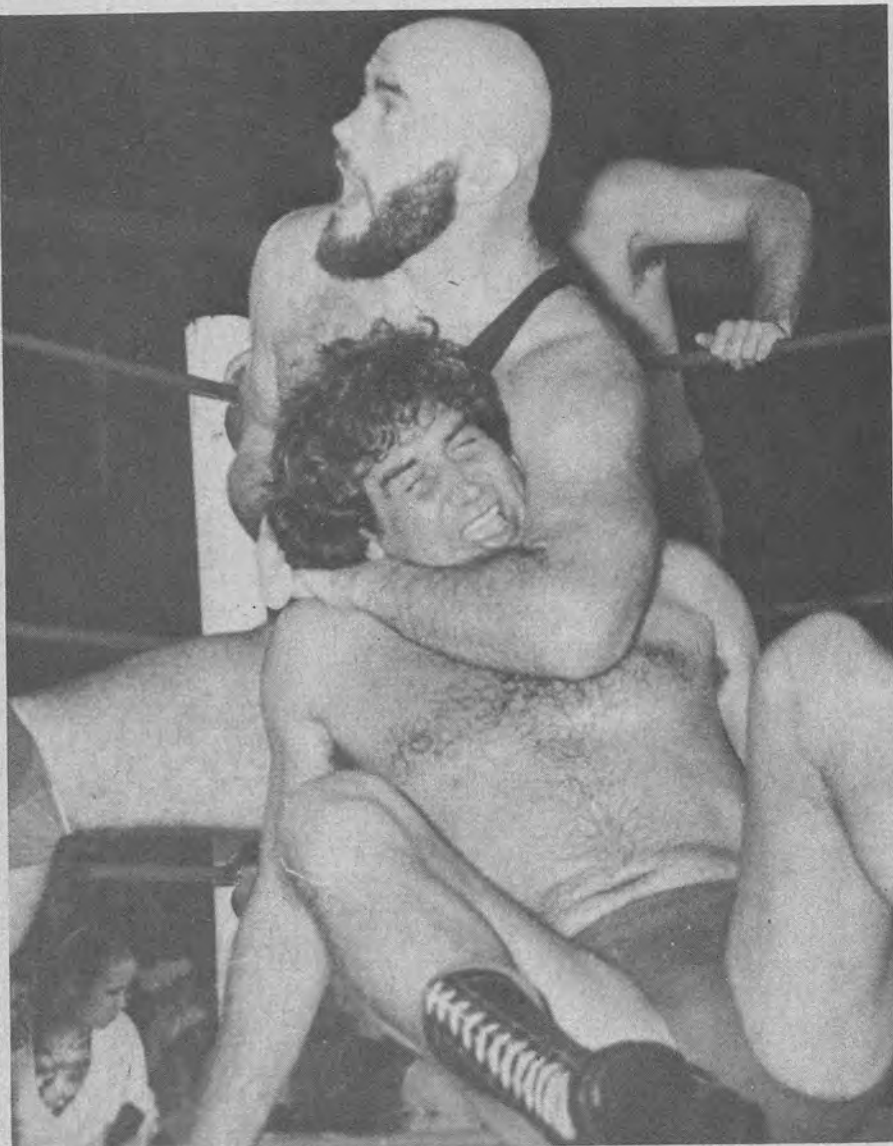
Q: If the champions insist they won't meet you—especially Backlund who has it written into his contract—can the fans' voices really change things?

A: Nobody bigger than the fans. Money is name of the game, and fans supply money. So they have to be heard. It's my only chance left.

Q: Do you think it might be a good idea to say something nice about the fans at this time? You have been pretty hard on them in the past.

A: You've been much harder than I have.

Q: I'm not trying to make them



Ivan Koloff has exhibited his awesome strength in matches against men like Jack Brisco (above) and Bruiser (below).



send letters for me. You're the one who needs help from those morons.

A: Anyone who sends letter supporting me isn't a moron. They have to be smart enough to realize justice must be done. They're always talking about how fairness is most important concern. Well, Koloff need a little fairness. Here's where the fans can prove their brains aren't made of mush.

Q: You must be pretty desperate to turn to the fans, especially after how they've treated you in the past.

A: I don't have much choice. They're my last resort. They have to come through for me. They just have to.

Q: And if they don't?

A: Then I'll have to take



Koloff uses a corkscrew on Paul Jones to send him hurtling to the canvas. Though he often breaks the rules, Ivan is still a well-respected grappler.



“

Every present referee should be fired. Then, new referees must be chosen by panel of respected wrestlers—no champions at all!

”

desperate measures I've been trying to avoid.

Q: What are they?

A: It's best I don't say.

Q: Don't want to tip your hand?

A: It's best if no one ever knows what Koloff have in mind. Let's just say if fans write in, it'll be best for wrestling. The whole of wrestling will crumble if they try to force me out. If Koloff don't get title shot within six months, professional wrestling will be disbanded after seven months. If I was to reveal why, wrestling would fall now. I still plan to make my living in wrestling, so I not say anything until I must. But you'd better believe I say it.

Q: Which of the three championships would you most like to own?

A: When I become champion, there won't be three championships. Only one man will rule all of wrestling—me. Believe it. I'll wrestle the other champs for nothing, just to get belts. Then Koloff travel the world defending

the one true champion. Any man who can become champion and not want to wrestle other two titleholders is coward. Every man who has been satisfied with partial title is partial man!

Q: That includes a lot of people.

A: And not one real man!

Q: Has there ever been a champion you've respected?

A: Not for long. I been impressed with some matches but never with the man. It hard to respect someone you know you can beat, especially when that coward is afraid to wrestle me.

Q: There have been champions who've given you a shot.

A: Not a fair one. They have referee in their back pockets. I happen to know one referee who sent his daughter to Yale on money Bruno Sammartino paid him in bribes.

Q: Is there any hope for fair officiating in wrestling?

A: There's always hope. There's just not much chance.

Q: How would you remedy the situation?

A: Every present referee should be fired. Then, new referees must be chosen by panel of respected wrestlers—no champions at all! Koloff would be perfect man to sit on such a panel. Stan Stasiak, Ric Flair, and Ken Patera are three others who would choose just referees. Then, we'd have monthly reviews of each ref, to make sure they're under control.

Q: You mean fair, not under control.

A: Yes.

Q: I'd like to thank you for the interview. I know how much you dislike sitting and talking to the press. You've been most kind.

A: It had to be done.

Q: For whatever reason, thank you. □

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**BEN
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BEHIND THE DOOR

(Continued from Page 8)



Ric Flair relaxes the afternoon before a match, not knowing Randy Gordon has a surprise for the notorious blond mat star. He found out soon enough!

What is there to like about their so-called style of wrestling? The way they cripple and maim? The way they cheat and break rules? When a man ignores the rules and goes against all established law and order, he is a criminal, and should be fittingly punished. In this case, banishment from wrestling for life seems fair!

The same goes for Dan Shocket, once a talented, gifted writer, but now a demented, twisted, confused young man. He uses his typewriter and this magazine as instruments with which to uphold everything that is bad in professional wrestling. Dan thinks the rulebreakers of the sport are his friends. I know better. Those guys would kick their own mothers if they thought it would bring them a few extra bucks.

While I have spent many

hours during the past month trying to help my ex-best friend Dan Shocket, I have not let up in my all-out war on rulebreakers. I spend nearly all my waking hours planning ways to run rulebreakers out of town, out of an area, out of wrestling. Ric Flair was just one rulebreaker who I had a bit of fun harassing during the past month.

After a recent match against tough preliminary wrestler Brooks Packer (a match which Flair won only by cheating and breaking virtually every rule in the book), Ric returned to his dressing room all smiles. Thanks to yours truly, the grin was short-lived. I had taken the label off Flair's hair spray can, and placed it on a can of hair dye given to me by my makeup expert, Matt Fazio.

After washing and blow-drying his gorgeous blond hair of which he's so proud, Ric reached for the can of hair spray. One onlooker who was allowed into Flair's dressing room said he

must have sprayed for at least 20 seconds. The spray was chemically treated, and five minutes after it was used, it began to turn Ric's hair jet black. Have you ever seen Ric Flair cry?

A few nights later, a "friend" of Flair's informed me that Ric would be taking two white rhinestone-studded robes with him on a 10-day road trip. On the back of both was embroidered "Nature Boy Ric Flair." I had one duplicate robe made up, with the exception of the embroidery, which said, "Nature's Mistake, Ric Flair." It was easy for me to substitute robes, and as I hoped, Flair never caught the change—until it was too late. The crowd howled with laughter as Flair, under his newly-dyed blond hair, stood in a state of dazed bewilderment. You should have seen how red Flair got when he found out what was written on his robe. At that moment, I'm sure he wished he was in another business!

I got a real good laugh the other night when I heard what happened to The Sheik. When the scoundrel warms up before a match, he really warms up—by throwing fire in his dressing room. Well, in a small, decades-old arena outside of Detroit, Sheik was throwing fire before going out to face Chief Peter Maivia. Suddenly, some cardboard caught fire. Then a wall went up in flames, then the ceiling. Sheik thought he was being called by Arabian Gods, and stayed in the room as it cracked in flames. Firemen were needed to rescue Sheik before the flames could sear him to a crisp. As it was, the vicious rulebreaker suffered minor burns on 10 percent of his body. Goes to show you—if you play with fire, you're gonna get burned!

Remember, stamp out rulebreakers before they stamp out you! ☐

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SINCERELY YOURS

(Continued from Page 10)



Bruno Sammartino learned to show no mercy against men like Superstar Billy Graham (above). Should Bob Backlund (below) follow his example?



advice, Steamboat could be champ.

ANNA KELLEY
Birmingham, Ala.

BRUNO WHO?

I think that when someone has lost the belt and shown he is not invincible, the time is ripe to put him to rest and stop using him as an example. Bruno Sammartino is old hat now and I don't think fans want to hear about him anymore. The Living Legend? Bull, that's what I say. He was good for a while, but now he's a has-been. He'll never

regain the belt. Why doesn't Sammartino retire and go back to Pittsburgh so we wrestling fans don't have to hear him complaining about how Graham stole the title. Let's hear about the new guys like Backlund and Steamboat and not old fogies like Sammartino.

ALICIA STORY
Hackensack, N.J.

KEEP THOSE MORALS, BOB

Why is it that a man's morals and principles must constantly be under attack? I refer specifically to "What Bob Backlund Can Learn from Bruno Sammartino" (April 1978). Obviously, Backlund believes it is wrong to descend into a brawling rulebreaker type of wrestler just because his opponent is filthy. Bob wants to stick to his principles and wrestle the way he wants, regardless of the type of opponent. I think he should be commended for sticking to his beliefs.

HENRY GOLDBERG
Worcester, Mass.

DO IT RIC

You can bet that Ric Flair is man enough to back up his boasts with actions and not hide behind any apron strings like the other good boys fans seem to like. Only Flair

has the capability of ruling the NWA as he says in "I'll Be NWA Champ For The Next 20 Years" (April 1978).

It takes a combination of skill, cunning and ruthlessness to win the belt. Only Flair has all these qualities to such an extent as to overshadow all the other would-be wrestlers. If he has to cripple an opponent or two, well, too bad. They would have fallen to someone else. At least when Ric does it the crippling will have a purpose.

KAREN KAROUNOS
Syracuse, N.Y.



Ric Flair cruelly stomps on Paul Jones. According to Flair, it is part of his plan to control wrestling for the next 20 years or even longer!

WE WANT MORE!

It seems that Michael B. Kape is the only columnist with any brains and creativity on your staff. Dan Shocket is a moron, Randy Gordon a moma's boy, and Bill Apter a retread from mind-control experiments. I really found the article on Dory Funk interesting. It went deeper and was without all that garbage that you read in the other columns. As far as I'm concerned, Kape deserves some sort of writing award for his always brilliant columns.

DAVE FEUER
Bayside, N.Y. □

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ON THE ROAD

(Continued from Page 18)



Above: Graham relaxes a moment as Mike goes off to greet one of his famous young neighbors. Below: Graham is concerned about his future as he swears the thrill of wrestling is as strong as ever for him.



that sort of thing.

"Another thing I like is my new-found independence. It is nice to be able to wrestle all over the world again. I didn't have that luxury when I held the WWF belt. I admit, \$250,000, give or take a few thousand, is a nice compensation, but believe me, money is not the only consideration."

I called a short rest in the conversation at this point. The full

moon shone over the water, so we decided to take a short walk along the beach. We met up with a few friends of mine, neighbors from down the road who happened to also be out early. A pleasant conversation ensued. We built a fire on the beach and just sat there watching the waves hit the shore. It was a nice way to spend a few hours.

"You know," Billy told me later at the house, "I could enjoy this kind of life. It's laid back and friendly. The world seems to be another place entirely. I could spend a long time in Easthampton. This is like a dream, a playland."

"This sure beats life on the road, but I don't have to tell you that. After seeing all this, I can see why you retreat here so often."

Of course, the life I lead on the road is not quite the life Billy leads. I asked Graham to tell me a little about it.

"There are times," he said, "that I truly believe that if I die and go to hell, it will be an endless procession of crummy motel rooms in equally crummy little towns."



Graham is overcome with emotion as the events of recent months, including his loss of the WWWF title, are detailed in this revealing interview.

"But don't get me wrong, I wouldn't trade it for anything. I love to travel. Sure, life can be hellish, but that goes with the territory. For all the miseries, there are twice as many pleasant things happening. Everything works out in the end. After all, if I didn't spend so much time on the road, I wouldn't have the chance to wrestle all those different guys. I couldn't stay in one place for a long time.

"Yet I could still enjoy this kind of life which you have: A house in the Hamptons, a townhouse in the city; a few days a month on the road. Say, is there any room for another reporter at your place?"

No, Billy, there isn't room for another reporter. We just hired a new one. But I did invite him to come up to the office any time he was in town. And of course, he was certainly welcome at the summer home any time he was in Easthampton.

Superstar left late last night. I am alone again at the house. But I'm sure a few wrestlers will be dropping in again from time to time. And everybody will be here for the annual July 4 party. Maybe I'm not so alone. In fact, I think I just heard a knock at the door. ☐

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NICK BOCKWINKLE

(Continued from Page 23)

a wrestler. A giant of a man.

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Now it is the time for Nick

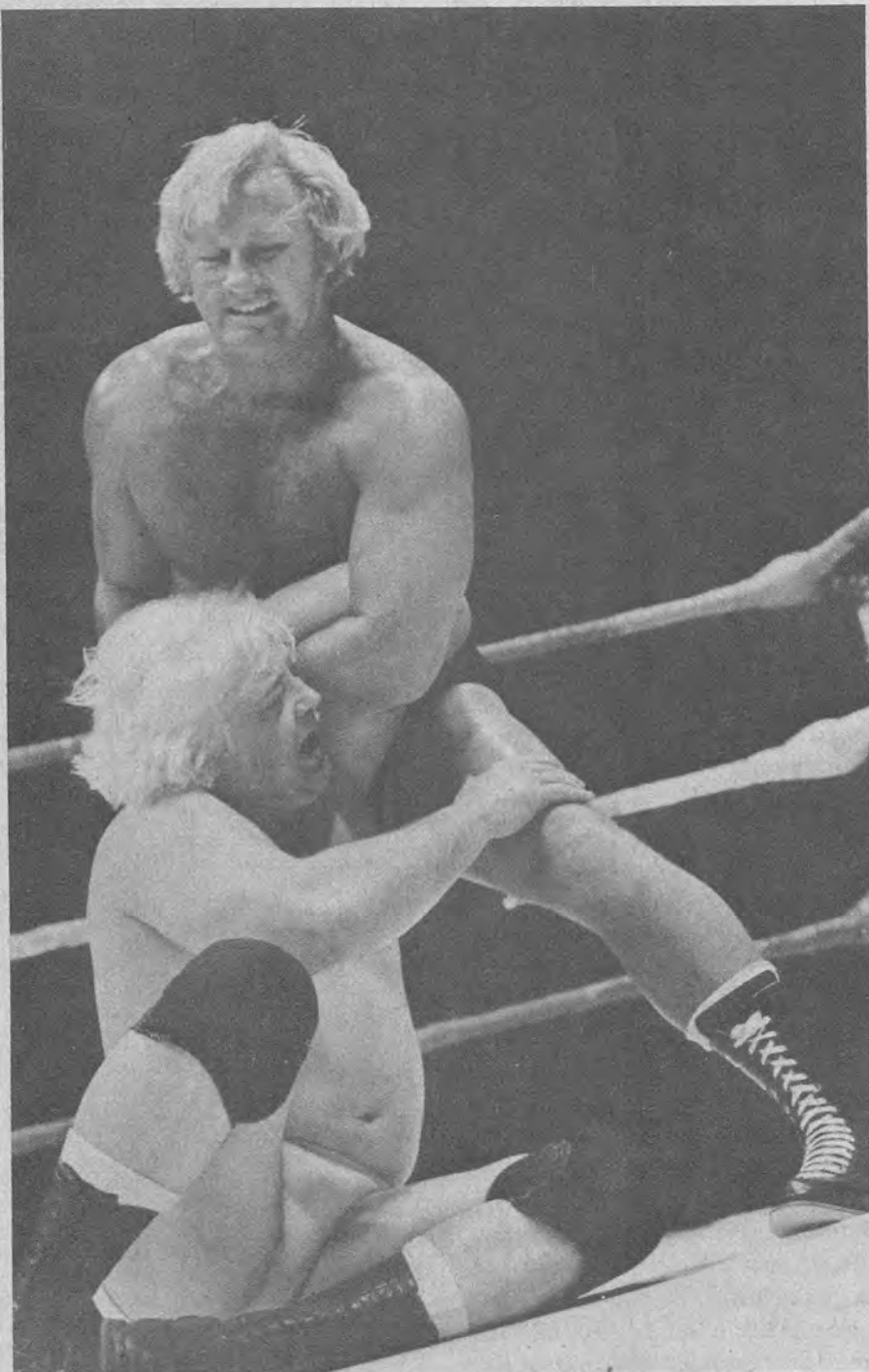
Bockwinkle to collect his

for perfection, a ruthless quest for violence.

One thousand days.

"When I first won the belt, the

first few months seemed like



proper glory, accept the fitting accolades, wear the mantle of greatness he so deserves.

One thousand days. He has never recoiled from challenges, has displayed a relentless drive

Nick Bockwinkle was once Ray Stevens' best friend. When circumstances pitted the pair against each other, Nick was able to keep Stevens from taking the AWA title. Bockwinkle has been able to turn back every challenge.

hell," said Bockwinkle, reclining casually on a thick, velour chair. "No one believed I was for real. I was subject to constant criticisms. Hell, I showed them."

One thousand days.

"To this day I don't understand what people had against me. They accused me of being a stinker in the ring. Hey, maybe I wasn't blessed with finesse. But no one in wrestling is as tough as I am. Maybe I scared them."

It wasn't terror which produced the long list of memorable AWA title bouts. It was a question of Bockwinkle's



Even Andre the Giant was unable to take the AWA title from Bockwinkle. Nick is still the champion!

talents, of his stamina, of his courage. And time and again he was forced to silence his critics with matches against the top wrestlers of his federation.

Verne Gagne. Greg Gagne. Jim Brunzell. Billy Robinson. Larry Hennig. Baron Von Raschke. Peter Maivia. Andre the Giant. Former partner Ray Stevens. Out of his area to wrestle Rocky Johnson, Dominic DeNucci, Terry Funk, Mr. Wrestling II.

"First they said I wasn't a top-flight talent. Then they said I

(Continued on page 52)

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NICK BOCKWINKLE

(Continued from Page 51)

was afraid. Then they said a true champion will wrestle out of his area. Do they believe me now?" Bockwinkle sneered.

One thousand days. Of blood. Of violence. Of courage.

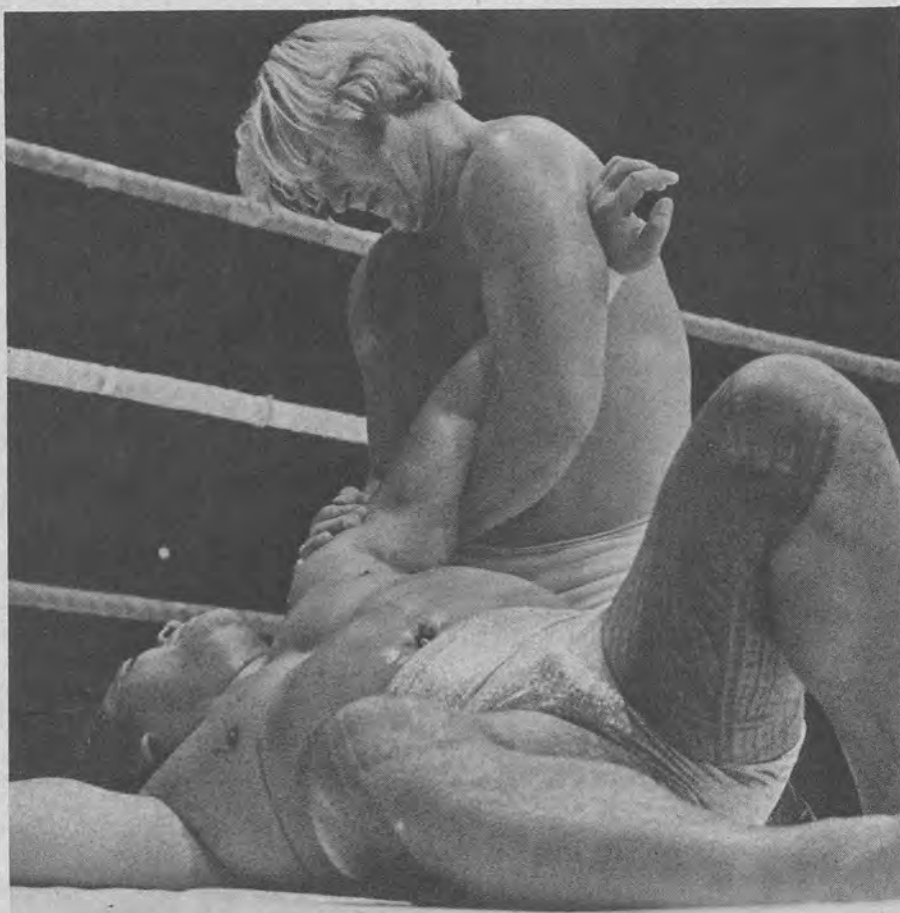
As much as I dislike the guy, you have to give him his credit. He's a fine champion," said Verne Gagne. "If you think the wrestling community was surprised when he took the belt from me, think how I felt. But he's shown he's a champion and I think he deserves to be described as one of the greats, his rulebreaking tactics notwithstanding."

One thousand days. Filled with challenges. Confronted with a continuous stream of eager wrestlers thirsting for his belt.

"Bockwinkle goes all out every minute of the bout. He's dirty but he's good. I



Above: Nick delights in tormenting former NWA champion Terry Funk. Below: Popular Peter Maivia writhes as Nick traps him in a perfect armlock.



underestimated him the first time we met. I'll never make that mistake again," said Billy Robinson.

One thousand days. Inundated with controversy.

"Nick is the greatest, no doubt about it. Anyone who says I've hurt Nick is out of his mind. I gave him the guidance he needed to become champion. At no time did the criticism directed at me affect Nick. I wouldn't let that happen," said Bobby Heenan, Bockwinkle's fiery manager.

One thousand days. Of vengeance.

"I just want to get my hands on his head and twist his neck around until he can go in two directions at once," snarled Ray Stevens, Bockwinkle's former tag team partner. I'll get him someday for what he did to me."

Now Bockwinkle starts on his second 1,000 days.

"I can go on forever. There isn't anyone wrestling who can take me. Besides, I don't have the pressure on me the way I did when I first won the belt. I've proven myself," Bockwinkle said heatedly. "The only thing I have to worry about is getting lazy. Who's left to beat?"

"For a guy like Nick Bockwinkle the challenges never end," said Heenan. "There's always some jerk out there with a big mouth who's just begging for Nick to permanently close it. Everyone agrees he's the best, so we're not even talking about matching him up with anyone of comparable ability."

One thousand days as champion. A remarkable feat. An accomplishment based on talent and guts, on determination and toughness. But won't it end eventually? And then what?

"Who says it has to end?" Bockwinkle laughed. "I might carry the belt into the grave." □

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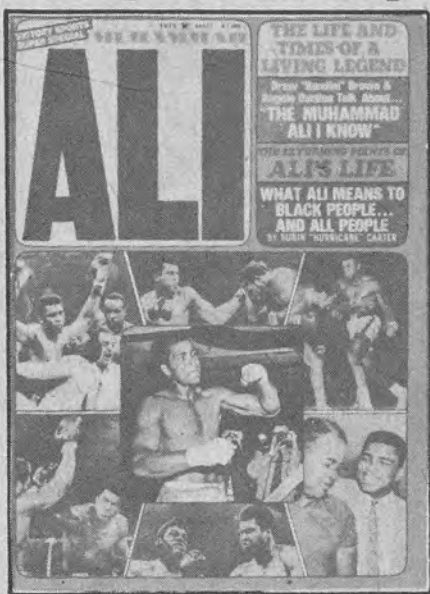
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BODYSLAMMS & PINFALLS

(Continued from Page 15)

wrestling was all about. Led by Graham, with an able assist by fearsome Ken Patera, the federation boasted the most remarkable one-two punch in wrestling history. What match in recent years can compare with Graham's title defenses against Dusty Rhodes and Mil Mascaras. The state of the sport was never better.

Today, the groundwork laid by Graham is in shambles. The federation is once again in the greasy grip of the hypocrites,



Above: The stupendously powerful Superstar Billy Graham captures Dusty Rhodes in a bearhug. This is why Graham was such a remarkable champion. Below: Backlund rears back to illegally punch a startled Baron Von Raschke.



Bob Backlund and his fellow thugs go after Bob Roop. This is typical of the upstart bully coward.

the fools who say they are honest, while they cheat worse than anyone else. What galls most are the fans this childish cretin attracts. To hear the innocent once again cheer their version of a champion is to know how low the sport can sink. Bob Backlund can only flourish in a nation that twice elected Richard Nixon. It's not what he does but what he says that people believe.

The truth: Bob Backlund is one of the worst cheaters in the history of wrestling. His use of

illegal tactics, which he claims are only done "when the other guy starts" (which means when he's losing), is a crime against the sport. Never have I seen such crude and ugly maneuvers executed. He doesn't even have the skill to be good at it. The man is a disgrace, a failure, and a shame. Those who march under his banner are either stupid or ignorant, perhaps both.

What can be done? First, no man should wrestle Backlund unless he has someone in his corner to check on the referee. This way, Backlund's bribe will be less effective. Also, every match should be checked by a panel of wrestlers and sports-writers. If they should see Backlund doing something outrageously illegal to win the match, it will be in their power to strip this louse of the title. Commissioners can't be trusted with this duty because Backlund is their stooge. They probably lend him money to bribe the officials.

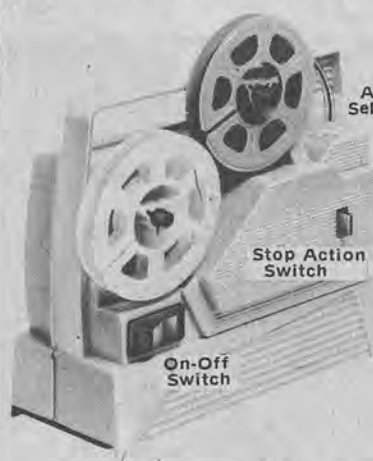
Second, wrestlers from all over the world should be recruited to defeat this menace. No expense should be spared by men who love the sport to bring Backlund low. The man must be defeated. Fans should support these men at all times, filling arenas and cheering them on. The promoters must be made aware how the fans feel about Bobby the Blight.

Lastly, fans should write to their favorite wrestlers, begging them to take on Backlund. Use all their powers of persuasion. The longer Backlund stays champion, the more damage he can do. We need only to look at the disgraceful championship reign of Bruno Sammartino to see how much trouble this can cause.

Bob Backlund must be stopped. The entire fate of wrestling depends on it! ☐

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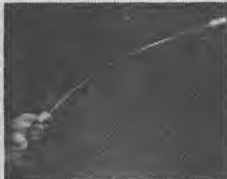
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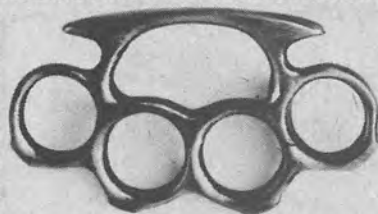
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Andre, Dusty, and Mascaras

(Continued from Page 33)



Above: Andre uses all his power to batter Mr. Fuji, who teamed with Professor Toru Tanaka and Ken Patera in a doomed attempt to defeat Andre, Rhodes, and Mascaras. Below: Tanaka and Fuji gang up on Andre. A moment later, Andre broke through and made his way to safety.



they typify dignity and decency. And respect.

Mil Mascaras. Dusty Rhodes. Andre the Giant. As a team wrestling the rulebreakers, they have proved to be unbeatable. The reasons are self-evident.

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no longer matters.

One of them is leaving.

"It just isn't fair to let them team up," said an anonymous rulebreaker. "Wrestling is supposed to give each side a fair chance. But in a six man tag team match you just don't have one lousy chance. There's no way to beat them. I was scheduled to go against them but I refused. If they gave me a gun, maybe. But not flesh against flesh."

He is leaving for the good of his friends.

Someone had to leave," he said. "We had a big discussion about who would be the one to go. Everyone felt it was his place to suggest going. But I guess I gave the best argument. Now the team can go out and punish those rulebreakers. It's no good being on a crusade to wipe out the villains if no one will wrestle you."

He knows he'll never return.

"Yes, there's something sad about the finality of the decision," he said softly. "But it had to be done."

And his friends regret it.

"It just shows what kind of man he is to offer to bow out for the good of all of us and what we represent."

"His heart is as big as he is. No, bigger."

It was a difficult decision for Andre the Giant to make. Yet, while he says he debated about it, he knew he had to be the one.

"People are afraid of my size. They don't think it's fair for me to be this big," Andre said sadly. "This way, I can still wrestle on my own and let Mil and Dusty do their thing together. Now we'll get more of the rulebreakers. Darn, are those rulebreakers big cowards."

While Andre expressed sadness, both Mil and Dusty were furious.

(Continued on page 58)

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Andre, Dusty, and Mascaras

(Continued from Page 57)

"This is the way they can stay alive. By avoiding us. They all know that if rulebreakers meet Dusty, Mil, and Andre, they won't get away with their stinking stuff," Dusty snorted.

"I am very saddened and very disturbed by Andre's decision to break up the team. It is unfortunate that circumstances dictate we cannot wrestle together anymore. Maybe the rulebreakers think that by breaking us up we will be weakened," said Mascaras. "They are in for a very big

"I offered to wrestle all three of them at the same time," said Ken Patera. "They sniveled and said no. They don't want to look bad for their gullible fans. They know that if the truth about them were known, they'd be finished in wrestling. What a dumb excuse."

Through the penetrating corridors that is the wrestling grapevine, the fans were alerted to the breakup of the trio. A steady stream of protesting calls bombarded promoters' offices.

"I told everyone the same thing," said a promoter. "If we can't find opponents then there can't be matches. What are we supposed to do, dig people up? Bockwinkle, Patera, all those people are brave when they're still in street clothes."

"It is a sad day for wrestling when cowardice is the controlling rule," Mascaras said. "The purpose of this great sport is to give the wonderful fans the best possible match. This should never have happened."

After the trio's final match—against Professor Tanaka, Mr. Fuji, and Ken Patera—a touching scene transpired in the dressing room. The three men had had towels made up with the lettering, The Three Musketeers, inscribed on the soft blue material. Andre sat motionless in a chair, then rose ponderously, scooped up his towel and handed it to Mil. The masked wrestler blinked back tears and glanced over at Rhodes. The American Dream stood and placed a large hand on Andre's shoulders.

"You keep that, Andre. We'll always be the Three Musketeers." □



Dusty appears to be finishing off Mr. Fuji but Ken Patera is ready to do anything to stop Rhodes.

surprise. Now we can get twice as many of them as before."

There is always one dissenter, one voice unafraid to voice a contrary opinion. Just voice it, that is.

"We're not afraid. They're the ones who are scared," bellowed Captain Lou Albano. "I'd put just one of my wrestlers into the ring against all three of them and guarantee you—that's right, man—guarantee you that my guy would wipe the floor with all of them. Goody-goody people make me sick to my stomach. Especially when you add the fact that they're afraid."

NAMES MAKIN' NEWS

(Continued from Page 39)

22,000 seats . . . "Crazy" LUKE GRAHAM crippled four wrestlers in Japan in what he calls a "warmup" for a title match against BOB BACKLUND . . . KILLER KARL KOX attacked one of our photographers in Florida and demolished \$600 worth of equipment . . . THE VALIANT BROTHERS have contacted CAPTAIN LOU ALBANO with hopes of landing some matches in the WWF areas. But Albano says he cannot handle their contracts at this time. He is too busy managing THE LUMBER-JACKS, who he hopes will win the WWF tag team title from DINO BRAVO and DOMINIC DeNUCCI.

Is there one man in wrestling who terrifies ANDRE THE GIANT? ERNIE LADD says yes—and he is that man! . . . BRUNO SAMMARTINO is enjoying a sensational victory streak in Australia . . . MR. SATO and MR. SAITO want to add another belt to their Florida tag team titles. They plan to take the U.S. title from MIKE GRAHAM and STEVE KEIRN. Mike and Steve have plans to keep the belts out of the hands of the deadly Japanese duo . . . TATSUMI FUGINAMI, the WWF junior heavyweight champion, will wrestle former WWF heavyweight champion SUPERSTAR GRAHAM the next time Graham tours the Orient.

That's all for now. See you next month! ☐

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Pic. Bk/Spr 76



Pic. Bk/Sum 76



Pic. Bk/Fall 76



Pic. Bk/Win 76



Pic. Bk/Mar 77



Pic. Bk/May 77



Pic. Bk/Fall 77



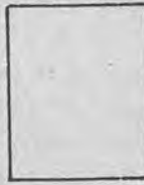
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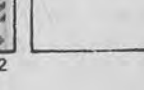
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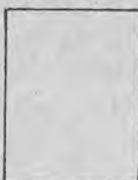
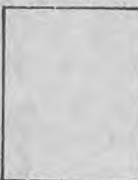
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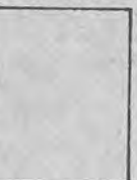
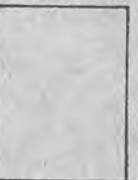
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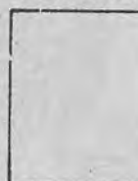
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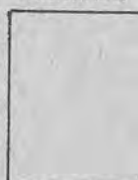
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BOB BACKLUND

(Continued from Page 37)

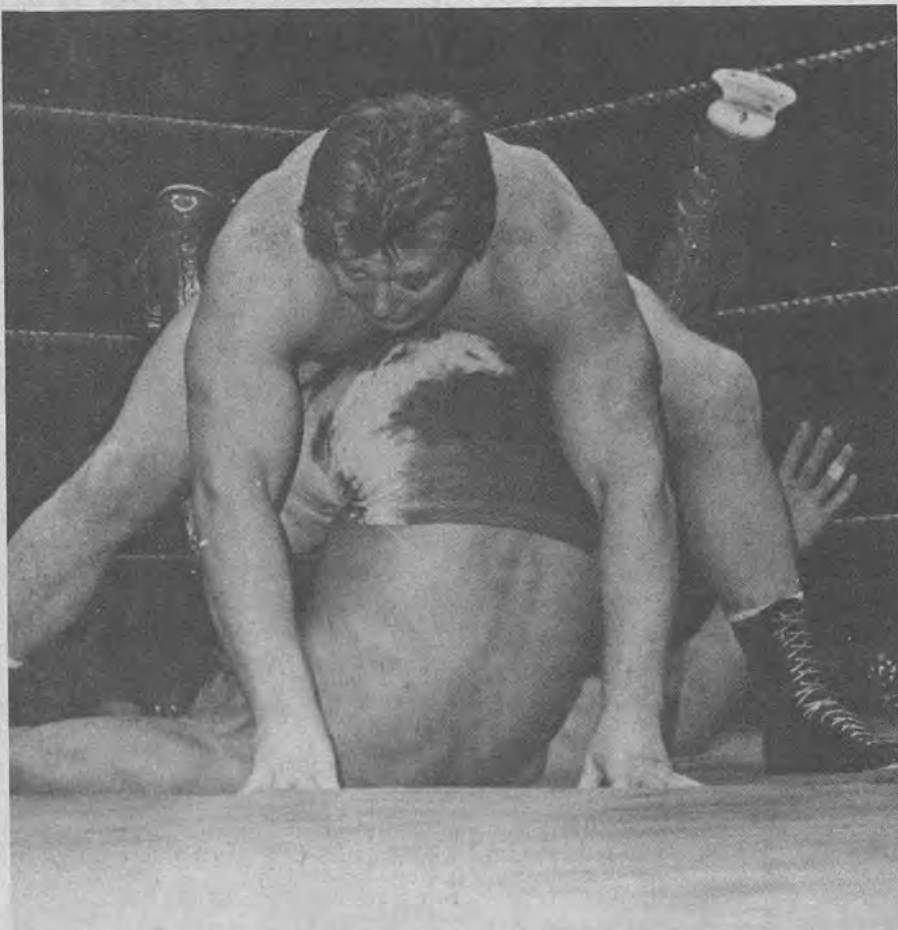
evening in Madison Square Garden, when the canvas and Backlund blended into one red portrait of pain, cause future hesitation on his part? Will he confront his own fragility and realize the WWF belt confers no immortality upon his flesh?

Can Bob Backlund learn from this first lesson, that to be champion means you must bleed?

"I looked deep into Bobby's eyes in the dressing room and all I saw was total amazement," said a close friend of Backlund's. "I don't know if he ever thought this could happen to him. I think only losing the belt could produce such a deep mental hurt in him. Even that, if he lost fairly,



Above: Backlund valiantly struggles but cannot best Graham at a test of strength. It took all of Backlund's brilliance to escape defeat at this time. Below: Backlund has Graham in a pin position but Billy escapes.



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might not approximate the way he felt after that match."

That night, Graham displayed every vicious, cruel trick he knows. Winning seemed secondary to inflicting pain. And blood. As Backlund reeled about the ring, tottering from loss of blood, Graham raised his bulging, bronze arms and laughed deliriously.

"I just wanted to see what color that fool bleeds," Graham said afterwards. "Was it red or yellow? Now he knows what it's like to bleed, the little creep. Next time we get in the ring they'll have to give me the belt because Backlund's gonna die."

There were several points during the match when even the most hardened observer was horrified. Graham repeatedly sought blood for the sake of blood, inflicted anguish for the sheer joy of producing pain in another, attempted vulgar, crippling moves as if practicing for the job as torturer in a dungeon.

And as Backlund bled, so did Graham's grin spread rhythmically to the dripping sound of Bobby's blood upon the canvas.

"He's just put together with spit. It isn't my fault he has weak and brittle skin," said Graham. "If he can't take it he shouldn't be champ. This isn't a sport for choirboys."

The resiliency and courage of Bob Backlund emerged as his wounds were attended to in the dressing room. Slowly, this brave and decent grappler swam up from the depths of anguish to answer his foe—and the questions which hung ominously on the tongues of spectators.

"It is a shock to get cut like that for the first time in your career," Backlund said in reflective, measured tones. "You do know that at any moment you can bleed. But until it happens you don't realize all the implications."

(Continued on page 64)

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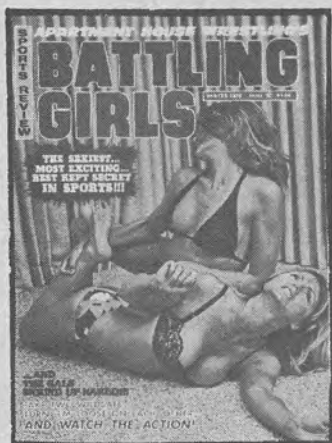
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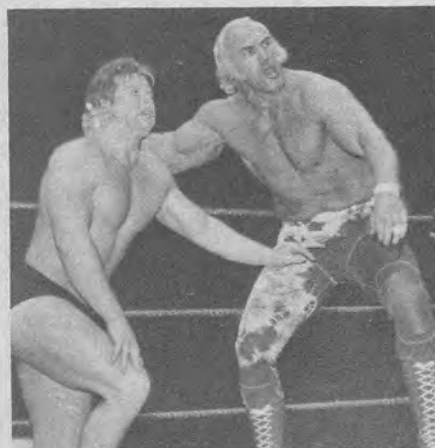
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BOB BACKLUND

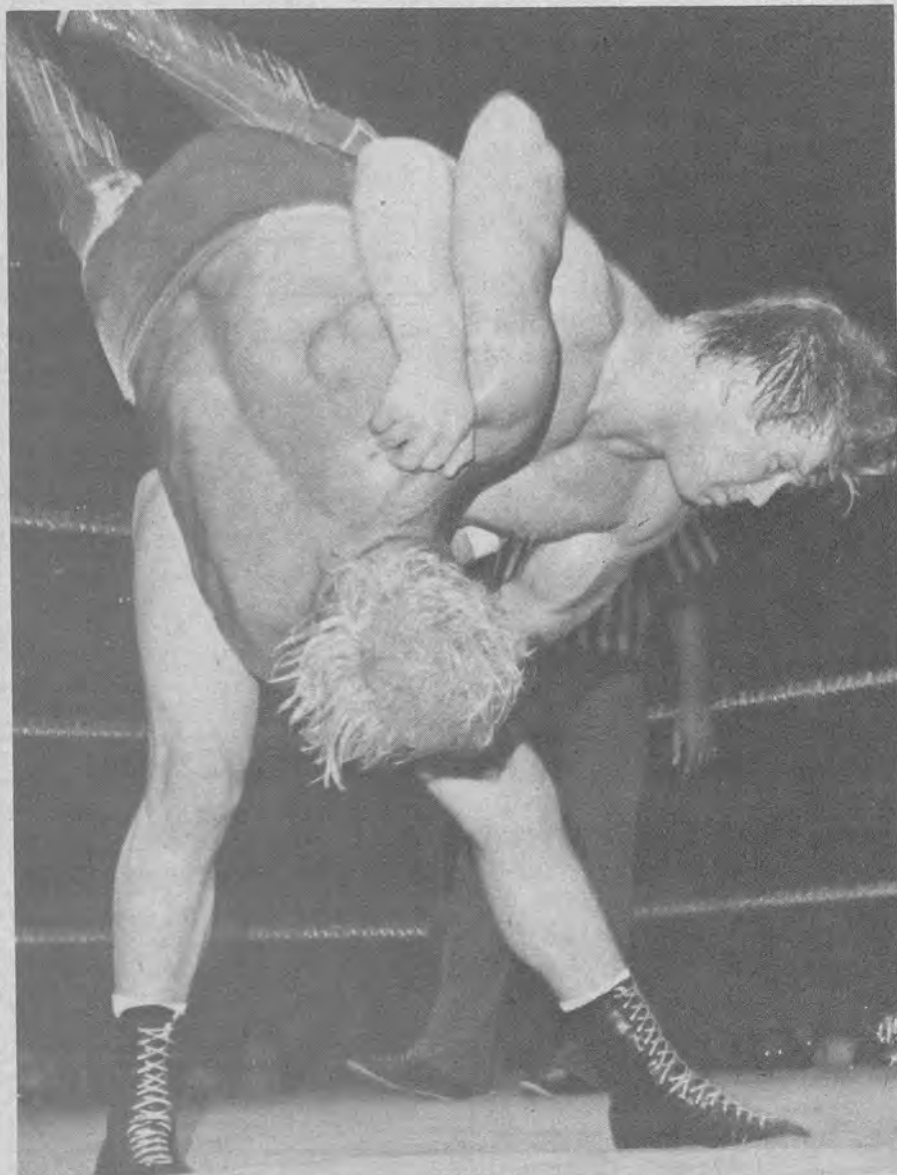
(Continued from Page 63)

"It's not that I'm weak-hearted and can't stand the sight of my own blood. It's just that this is the first time. No, I don't think Superstar was glad to see me bleed. He's mean, but no one is that mean.

Every time I defend my belt another aspect of being champion emerges. You see the pressure of being champion, of keeping the belt so the fans have a true champion to root for. You see how guys are more motivated wrestling against you when you're champ than when you were just another contender.



Above: Graham sends Backlund hurtling into the ropes. Below: Bob's great skill enables him to send Graham crashing to the canvas early in the championship battle.



"And, of course, the fact that every match is super-important. But I think I've recovered already from this incident. Maybe the best thing that could have happened was for me to get this first experience out of the way. Now I know what it's like. If it happens again I'll be used to it."

"But there's another question everyone wants to ask, isn't there?" a grin inexplicably crept across Backlund's pleasant features. "Am I going to be gunshy?"



Backlund struggles wildly to escape as Graham tries to throw the champion over the ropes. All of Bob's agility was needed to escape that fate.

"I'm wrestling for something beyond myself that wouldn't permit me to be afraid. Know what that is? The fans. No amount of blood will ever stop me from defending my belt and winning. I love and believe in my fans too much to ever allow that to happen."

And, judging by the jeers which cascaded about Graham's shoulders as he left the ring, the feeling is mutual. ☐

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